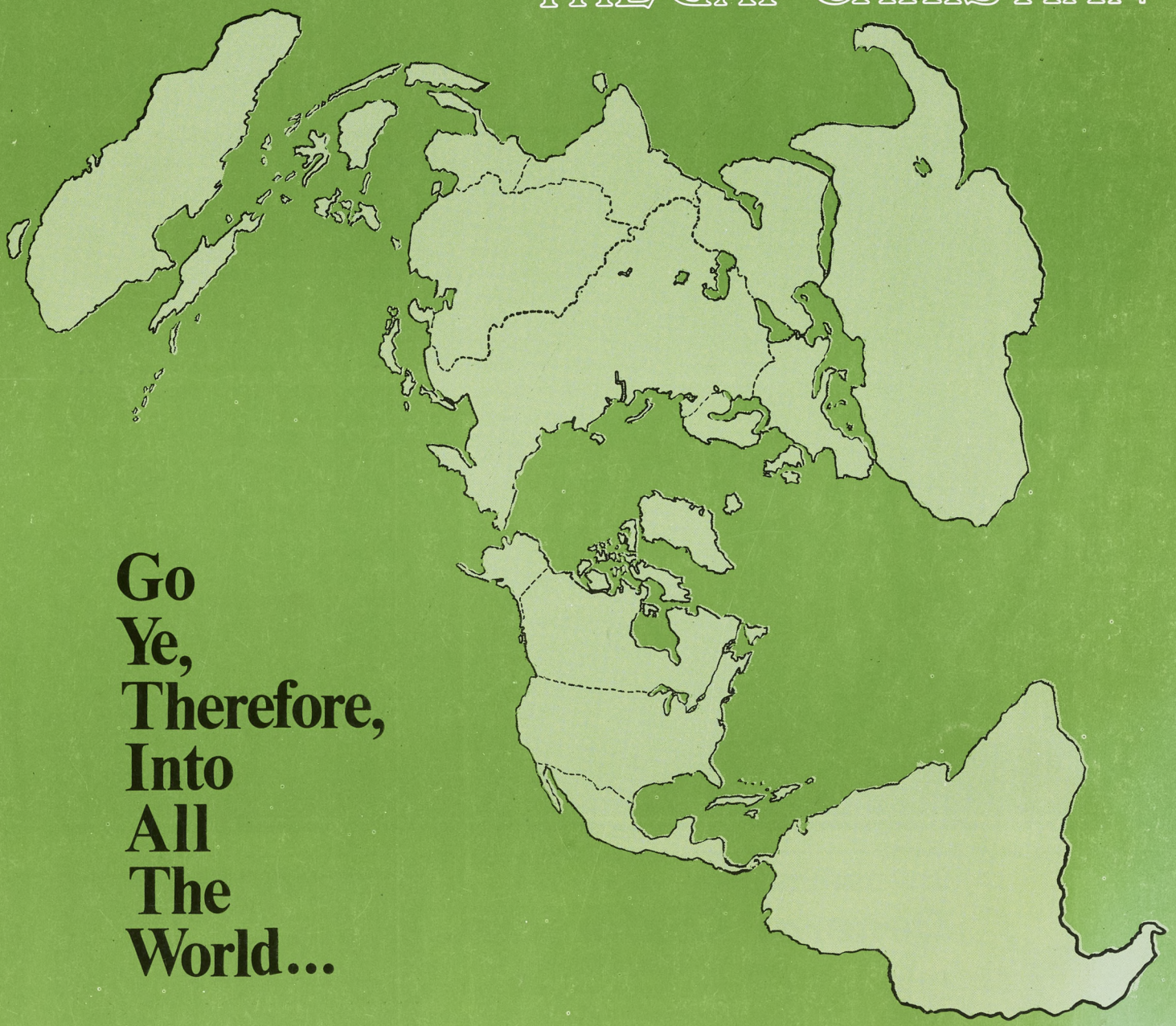
IN UNITY

March 1976

and beginning with this issue:
THE GAY CHRISTIAN



Go Ye, Therefore, Into All The World...

The News And Opinion Journal of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

Jesus Said: "Go Into All The World..."

by Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry

In this issue of IN UNITY you will read of the worldwide ministry of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. We praise God that we are part of a work that was raised up and ordained by God to carry the message of God's love to all persons wherever they might be.

We thank God that today the revelation of God's love for all people is now being preached by the ministers, members and friends of MCC in Australia, Great Britain, New Zealand, Nigeria and Canada, as well as the United States.

As you read this issue of IN UNITY I'm sure you will be as proud as I am of the fantastic progress of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches in Australia under the direction of Coordinator of Church Extension, Reverend Lee J. Carlton. The laity and ministry of Australia and New Zealand are to be commended for their faith, loyalty and pioneering spirit in seeing the Universal Fellowship established in their home countries. I foresee the day very soon when these two countries will be sending ministers and missionaries out to yet other countries to establish works for the Universal Fellowship as we spread the Good News of Jesus Christ's love for all people.

On a more sober note, after I arrived back at Fellowship headquarters, I discovered that the wide publicity over my visit, and over the appointment of the Reverend Jan Weymouth as Gold Coast MCC Pastor, prompted an agitated meeting of clergy from established churches in the area of Brisbane and Gold Coast, Australia.

A survey of comment by clergy published in the "Gold Coast Bulletin" on January 28 quoted a few strong condem-

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REMEMBER THE 1976

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and "AFFIRMATION 76"

IN WASHINGTON D. C.

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-in-in-in-in-in-in-inside IN UNITY

and beginning with this issue: The Gay Christian

In this issue, you'll find another magazine. It's UFMCC's theological journal, *The Gay Christian*.

The Gay Christian began in New York, where, in 1972, Roy Birchard decided such a forum for reflection was an idea worth selling the board of the church of which he was a member, MCC New York. It became the journal of the Northeast District, and remained so until last summer.

The Gay Christian has a readership of its own, now joined with that of IN UNITY. And it has a style and tradition of its own. Don't expect authoritative dogmatic pronouncements in its pages – ones that pretend to speak for everyone. If what you read doesn't speak for you, you may respond. Our writers have no illusions that they will always persuade you. They do hope to stimulate your thinking.

We cannot afford to simply accept, unquestioned, all those assumptions we bring with us from our various ecclesiastical backgrounds. *The Gay Christian* will question, prod, and propose new approaches to faith. We hope it helps you put together answers that are good for you - - while IN UNITY brings you the news that affects us all in the shared experience that is MCC.

F. Jay Deacon

IN UNITY is a success. Many people feel a new closeness to each other.

IN UNITY is a success. Many write that they have received encouragement from hearing what God is doing through MCC around the world.

IN UNITY is a success. Against great financial odds, IN UNITY has appeared five times in six months. This March issue covers February and March. The extra time made it possible to bring our readers the balance and extra depth provided by combining IN UNITY and THE GAY CHRISTIAN. The Rev. F. Jay Deacon is editor of THE GAY CHRISTIAN. He does the layout and design. We do the typesetting, printing, and distribution from the Los Angeles Publications Office. This gives us the new IN UNITY, containing THE GAY CHRISTIAN, making it the News and Opinion Journal of Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. Needless to say, we are proud to present IN UNITY in this new dimension.

IN UNITY is a failure until all 20,000 MCC adherents around the world have a new issue of IN UNITY in their homes every month.

IN UNITY is a failure until all 20,000 MCC adherents around the world read and grow in unity from the monthly IN UNITY.

IN UNITY is a failure until each of the 20,000 MCC adherents around the world purchase 2 or 10 extra copies of IN UNITY each month to share with their relatives, friends, and neighbors in their witnessing for the Lord.

In the meantime, IN UNITY plods along, like the rest of us mere humans, striving to get into that upward and outward spiral that leads to the unification and perfection of all in Christ.

Richard R. Mickley

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IN UNITY

The News and Opinion Journal of the Universal
Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

Volume VI, Number 2 February-March 1976

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GROWTH TO RESPONSIBILITY

by Rev. Richard C. Vincent

In a recent discussion, someone commented that they felt that I had "double standards." This was not the first time someone had made such a remark and it set me to thinking on the subject. I felt that I did not have "double standards" but, if I projected such an image, then I needed to examine the situation.

Sometimes human emotion can be a strong deterrent to reasoning. So, to eliminate the human factor, let us first examine an inanimate object rather than human.

Every object has a responsibility to fulfill the purpose for which it was made. It may fulfill other needs but its primary responsibility is to fulfill its purpose of existence. A kitchen knife has the primary purpose (responsibility) of cutting. When it is dull, it can no longer perform this function effectively and must be sharpened (renewed). If it can not be sharpened, it will eventually be replaced by a useful kitchen knife and find its way into the box of other less useful gadgets. The knife may also be used for other purposes, such as: spreading butter on toast, tightening a screw on the toaster, using its handle to drive a nail into the wall to hang a calendar, prying open a lid on a can of cocoa, etc. Obviously, extensive use for secondary purposes could damage the knife and render it useless for its primary purpose of cutting.

Now let us consider a building. Many of us have been involved in a search for a church home. Many of us have had the experience of finding a building originally built for another purpose and converting it into our church home. One could have the attitude that the building was in reality caused to come into existence so that it could serve as our church home at a point in time. Its prior use and its use after we no longer have need of it are secondary uses. Remember the healing of the blind man by Jesus? (John 9:1) The man had been blind since birth so that "The works of God might be made manifest in him" ... not due to any sin. He was there to be the object of healing to demonstrate the power of God.

A building has the responsibility of fulfilling certain basic needs. It must be remodeled for each use from a small grocery, to a tailor shop, to a shoe repair shop, to a gift shop, to a church ... that is to say its responsibility is expanded and redirected to serve the new function. One could not conveniently hold a worship service for a congregation of 50 in a room full of machinery used to repair shoes. The building has had to grow to its responsibility. There is no "double standard" for the building. It merely serves its purpose of the fleeting moment.

The building next door that has become a bar can not be evaluated in terms of being a shoe repair shop. However, in our fantasy, we could say the ultimate purpose of ALL buildings should be to become a church in which God's glory could be proclaimed. That would be the supreme responsibility common to all buildings.

Now, let us slip the human factor into our discussion and let us come from the direction of ultimate purpose toward which we should ALL strive. Our ultimate purpose, as human, is to serve God and to grow in Spirit and in Truth so that we will live eternally in God's glory. Because of our human nature, we greviously fell from perfect Grace in Eden and we have been making a mess of our lives ever since. Indeed, God loves us all and forgives our transgressions if we are sorry for these faults and resolve to do better. Jesus showed the way but each individual must choose to follow. As the perfect Parent, God loves us as we are and will continue to love us even if, by our own will, we earn the reward of eternal fire! The father of the prodigal son always loved his son but the son had to return home to receive the love of the father.

We serve a purpose, oftentimes a very commendable and worthwhile purpose, but we sometimes neglect our ultimate purpose ... our primary responsibility. It is necessary for us to consciously grow into that responsibility. If we allow secondary responsibilities or selfish desires to stand in the way of accomplishing our primary responsibility, we are at fault ... we have fallen short of the target.

There is only one "standard" and that is the standard set by the Christ. Unfortunately, instead of following the example as little children, we frequently read *into* the example of Jesus those elements that justify our own life rather than to read *from* the example of Jesus those elements that would help us grow to our responsibility.

In this material world of time and space, we do things step-by-step. In several steps, requiring time, we walk from our front door to the corner bus stop. We spend three or four years to attain a college education, which is only a step in our pathway of life. There are many paths to the ultimate purpose. For some it may be a life of an illiterate and for others a life of a highly educated scholar ... but ALL have the

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MCC Across America:

(Rev. Mickley was on the East Coast recently attending a Criminal Justice Conference. He made some stops along the way. Here are his impressions.—LB)

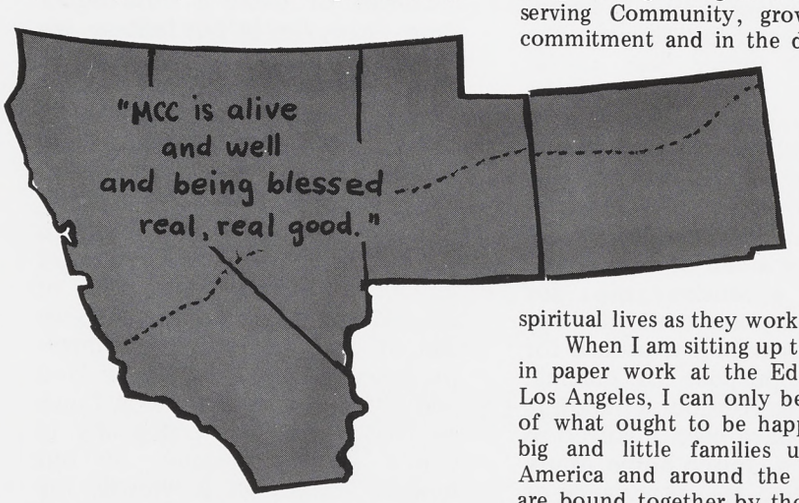
As I rode out of New York City on a Greyhound Scenecruiser, the scene along Adam Clayton Powell Avenue in Harlem was anything but beautiful. New York is a dirty city. Times Square is a disgrace. I was appalled not to find even the "razzle-dazzle" kind of "beauty" I remembered from years ago.

As I rode into Providence, RI, I found a beauty of a different kind. I discovered the comforting scene of a well-shepherded flock around their pastor. It was a Tuesday evening. Visiting evangelist Paul Van Hecke was preaching. Poverty was everywhere. But the Spirit of God was filling the place set aside for worship.

Brother Paul brought a simple, dynamic message that warmed every body to the bone that had been chilled by the New England winter. The hymns, helped along by the tiny electric organ, the strong voice of Brother Paul leading "What a Friend We Have in Jesus," the altar call that must have been a most significant moment for a dozen people, — all were among the things that I noticed in that hour of worship in Providence.

But most of all I perceived a people with a pastor. I saw the same kind of community of love that had developed in Phoenix under the guidance of the same pastor, the Rev. Joseph Gilbert. I saw a family that had each other to turn to in genuine caring and concern, but who also had in Pastor Gilbert, an advisor, friend, and counselor whom they trusted, loved, and with whom they felt secure. I wondered what Providence would be like without him, or somebody like him, without MCC. I perceived that the people who call themselves MCC Providence need this church. I thanked God that there is an MCC Providence and a Pastor Gilbert, giving them the same love and care that he would give his own son. Sometimes it is a stern and disciplining love, but always aimed at the growth and greater good of the individual and the community.

I was impressed to learn that the pastors of Boston, Providence, Hartford, and Worcester meet regularly for prayer and sharing, planning and encouraging each other. I see this as a model that could be followed elsewhere for the glory of God, for the upbuilding of the ministry. Isolated individuals are often paralyzed, unable to focus on clear objectives, and easily discouraged. Great effectiveness can be achieved on any level when two, three, or more join together in a Christian Community in Action — where they pray together, plan together, and work together for a more effective ministry. (Along the way some ministers spoke in glowing terms of the way God was working through their pastoral staff meetings. Other staff ministers complained of the lack of praying, studying, working together in effective staff meetings.)



Back in New York City I had been quite encouraged and impressed by the Interreligious Task Force on Criminal Justice I had attended. This was a meeting which brought together the best informed and most capable religious leaders in the United States in the field of criminal justice. Having an opportunity to meet with and talk with Russell Means (of Wounded Knee fame) at this meeting reminded me that there is at least one other persecuted minority in the United States in this bicentennial year.

The hospitality of Rev. Gilbert Lincoln, Worship Coordinator of MCC New York, gave me a chance to get to know this energetic minister and hear about the beautiful work of the Lord in their not-so-beautiful city. God is "daily" adding to their number as the worshipping community of MCC New York is now nearly 200 on an average Sunday. But more than that I was impressed in discussions with New Yorkers to learn of the ways in which people are growing as a witnessing and serving Community, growing in their commitment and in the depth of their spiritual lives as they work for the Lord.

When I am sitting up to my eyeballs in paper work at the Editor's desk in Los Angeles, I can only be dimly aware of what ought to be happening in the big and little families up and down America and around the world which are bound together by the same family name, the love of the same Lord, and same assurance that they are loved by the Lord.

Brief stops in Salt Lake City with Pastors Candy and Alice and in Omaha with Pastor Bob Arthur assured me that the Lord is working in those cities. I surprised Rev. Arthur as he was teaching an eager group a "seminary level" bible course. The love those people have for Bob and the love Bob has for them made me think for a long time as I continued bussing east from Omaha. "What would Omaha be like without MCC, without a dedicated MCC pastor?"

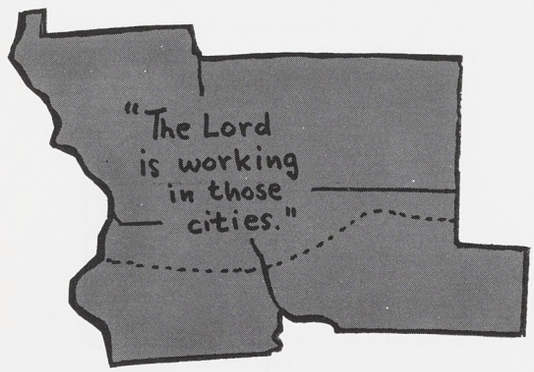
The love that overflowed from the Akron Church on its chartering day was too real, too deep, and too Christlike to

Observations On A Bus Trip

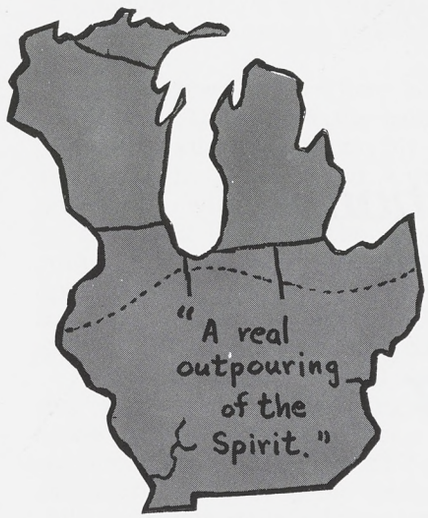
by Dick Mickley

be a one day thing. I could see it in each of the board members, in Gary knocking himself out to serve everybody, in the organist and in the music director, and in the friendly members there was that evidence of spiritual maturity that Rev. Perry declared to be a sign that this congregation was indeed ready to be named "a church." Certainly the leader in this Christian maturity is Pastor Stan Roberts. My test is still: is it a people worshipping together, witnessing together, working together? I saw Akron meeting the test. It was all so different from that day two years ago in March when I was present along with Rev. Perry when just so many people, separate, isolated, individual people, gathered in a non-community for the very first MCC worship service in Akron, OH.

I wanted to spend as much time as I could with my mother a few miles from Akron. She's so understanding, but I wonder if she wonders what would take me out in the snow and ice and hazardous driving to attend MCC Akron's chartering service when I could have relaxed at "home" and had dinner with her and the family. I sometimes wonder if anybody could ever understand how MCC can be a family to so many of us in such a strong and binding way. Mother was worried about my traveling so far in the winter by bus — that I would get seriously sick or something and be "out there" all alone. I said, "Mother, even if I would, I want you to know I have friends in every city of America." (And some other countries, too.) Friends, yes. And family, too.



The Eastern Ministers' Conference brought together many of these friends for a family gathering. The caring, the sharing, the intimate trusting must have added a few notches to the scale of maturity for all of us. The tenderness of the loving reunion of Chip and Troy on Troy's return from Australia, deprived of privacy, was an inspiration to the unintentional lookers-on. The Akron Forum, led by Dr. Dick Bennet and his lover, Tom Gertz, provided for me some real insights into self-understanding, self acceptance, and self-love which are so



indispensable as a starting point for effective ministry and wholesome inter-personal relationships. And yet, these are areas where I perceived a genuine need for personal growth.

In Detroit, my "MCC Hometown," — the town where I came out and the town where I discovered MCC — there is a lot of excitement among my friends about the new co-pastors, Nancy and Heather. As one who has observed this church of beautiful people since 1972, I can honestly say God is working through these dynamic ministers. They're "dynamite" — to boomerang a term used every hour on the hour by Heather. I talked with a dozen or more

of my "Old friends." Rick, the organist, is enthused. Ken Woodside, the Pastor of the host church, himself "Mr. Dynamite," sees a real outpouring of the Spirit and has doubled his cooperative collaboration. Lee and Gwen, Nelson, Phil, John, and Bob (who is always quick to critique) — without exception there is enthusiastic excitement about the direction the Lord's work is moving in Detroit. And that holds for me, too. I know these women. I know how God uses them. I know how they let God use them.

A highpoint of my visit to Detroit was lunch and conversation with Brian McNaught. We had talked on the phone, exchanged letters, but never met. His firing as a popular columnist for the *Michigan Catholic* and his consequent national publicity had happened after I left Motown. Brian is the National Social Action Chairperson for Dignity, but still unemployed. Such talent, such a sparkling personality — unemployed because of the prejudice of society and the homophobia of the Roman Catholic Church. Meeting Brian was a highpoint because he's refreshing. Meeting Brian brought home to me the lessons of where I was and how God led me to acceptance and Fellowship where I now am.

Nancy and Heather matter of factly told me about their two days of prayer and retreat with Elder Freda Smith and

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Four Congregations - Innovative and Growing

by The Rev. Joan Johnson

In February I was privilaged to visit MCC congregations in Tucson, Phoenix, Albuquerque and St. Louis. I was on a fact finding tour under the auspices of the Southwest District and the UFMCC.

One fact I learned is that weather is no respecter of trips or ministers. I arrived in Tucson to a hailstorm. I was hit by 4 inches of snow while I was in St. Louis and buried under another snowstorm in Albuquerque, and arrived in Phoenix along with a flash flood!

It was an informative, exciting trip. Nowhere in this world will anyone receive a warmer, more loving welcome than among the congregations of Metropolitan Community Churches.

I was able to spend four days in Tucson with Worship Co-ordinator Al DeLabio. Al and I have been friends for a long time. In fact he introduced me to MCC. He is doing a great job in Tucson. We had 23 people in service Sunday, January 25th. The congregation there took me out to dinner after the service. I was able to meet with persons responsible for the Alcoholic programs there, and was extremely gratified to see that program and ministry flourishing! (By the way, the National Alcoholic Ministry will be one year old on February 28th, and how it has grown!) I was also priviliged to spend a day with Mike Nordstrom and look at the Ministry to the Handicapped that he is so deeply involved with.

On January 26th I flew on to St. Louis, and was met by Rev. Frank Crouch. What a delightful man. It was the first time I really had a chance to get to know Frank. He very graciously took me on a sightseeing tour of St. Louis, even got me to the top of the "Arch," and that's a scary trip 634 feet above the city.

I stayed at the home of Judy Weber and Sue Robinson. These two women really typified the solidarity that can exist in a relationship. They have been together for 15 years. And talk about "involved." They are both Deacons in the church, and carry some heavy counseling sessions. Judy is the Chairperson of the Task Force on Alcoholism, so we found time to really look at what has been accomplished, and the goals we want to set. Judy is in the process of writing a book on "Gay Al-Anon" which is sorely needed. The AA group there honored me by asking me to speak at their meeting, and really topped it off by having one of the top people from the Central Office of AA in St. Louis at the meeting. Also look for Exhorter Karen Wheeler to begin the second Chirho group in St. Louis.

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Defending Her "God-Given" Sexuality

by Grant Harden
Staff Writer
The San Jose Mercury
[Reprinted by permission]

JACKIE HARRIS line sketch — lgb

The petite Mississippian, an acknowledged homosexual and spokesman for the Metropolitan Community Church of San Jose, refuses to be stereotyped or "excluded from God's kingdom" because of her sexual proclivities.

"I take it as a personal affront that some of you question my morality and the morals of my Christian gay brothers and sisters," 32-year-old Jackie Harris firmly told those gathered at a forum at Calvary United Methodist Church in San Jose.

The educational forum was called by the Santa Clara County Council of Churches to discuss Christian perspectives on homosexuality in advance of Tuesday's vote on whether the MCC will be allowed to continue as a member-church of the council.

"I have a successful marriage that is Christ-centered. I am monogamous and have no desire to be otherwise," said the blue-eyed West Valley College student. "I don't lie, cheat, or steal, drink to excess, or pass judgment on those who do not conform to my set of standards."

Jackie Harris, raised a Southern Baptist in Mississippi, was married last April to another woman by the Rev. William D. Chapman, pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church.

As a member of MCC's board of directors, Harris was selected to represent the church at Tuesday's forum.

She drew upon her own experiences to explain the causes of homosexuality, the myths of homosexuals, and her own relationship with Christ.

She said one of the major points that seems to bother the opponents of MCC's membership is the question of how homosexuals get to be homosexuals.

"We could debate this all night and waste our time doing so. Some of the theories are: genetic, chromosomal and hormonal dysfunctions; pathogenic parent-child relations, cultural pressures and social conditioning. Everyone seems to have a pet theory," she told the forum.

For an explanation she turned to Dr. Evelyn Hocker writing in the International Encyclopedia of Social Sciences:

"From the limited evidence currently available, it is clear that the diverse forms of adult homosexuality are produced by many combinations of variables, including biological, cultural, psychodynamic, structural, and situational. No single class of determinants . . . accounts for all or even one of these diverse forms."

Harris says the myths that have grown up around homosexuality have given a badly distorted mental picture of the homosexual.

She says the common image of a homosexual is "A lisping, effeminate man who really wants to be a woman. He hangs around schools waiting for young boys to molest, and in general, conducting his life with one purpose; sexual promiscuity.

"He is incapable of loving someone to the point of having a lasting relationship, of contributing positively to society, of maintaining a morally upright life."

Harris maintains the homosexual "can be either male or female."

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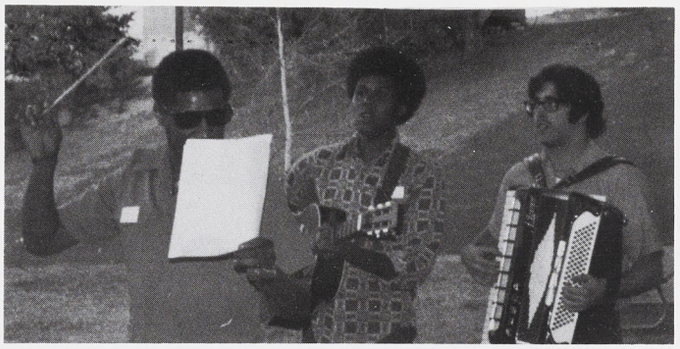
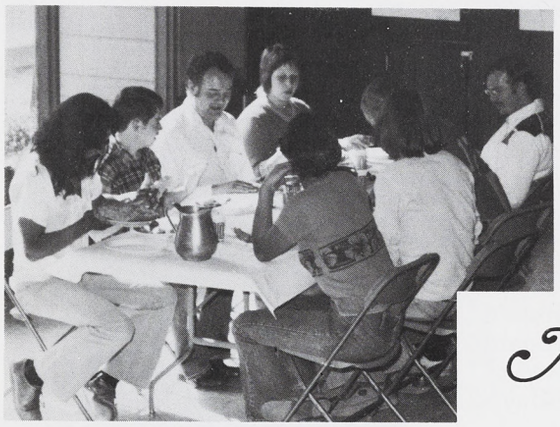
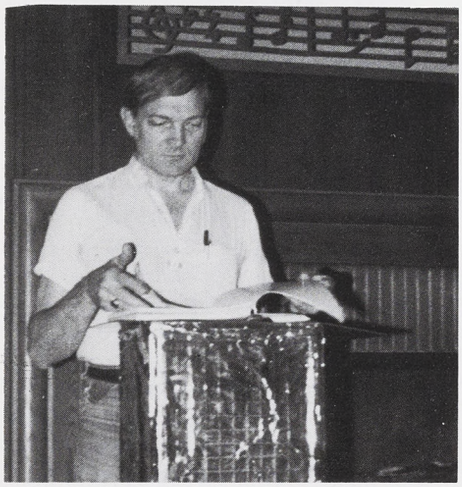
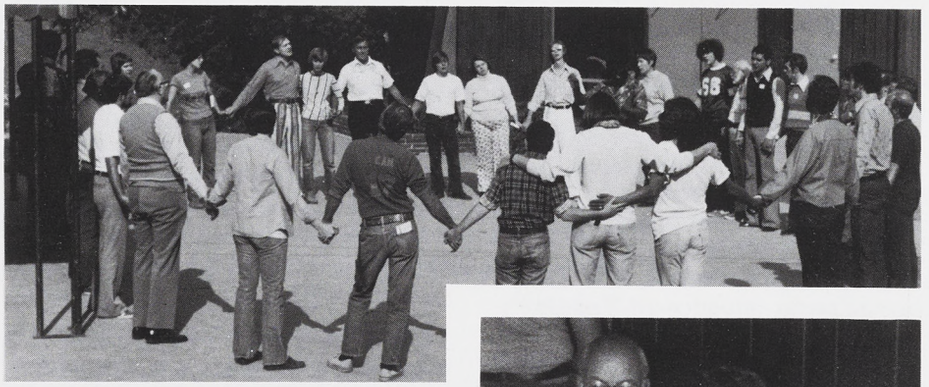
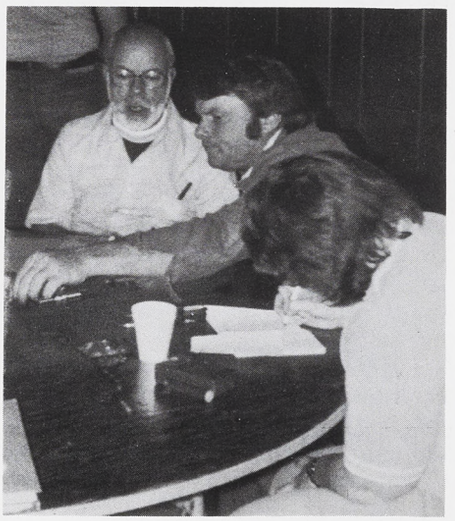




MCC's First Exercise in Christian Community Living







The exercise in Christian Community Living is a spiritual experience conducted by a team of ministers and lay people beginning on Friday night and ending on Sunday night.

Team members prepared themselves for Exercise 1 over a period of six months by prayer, study, personal sacrifice in order that they might understand this method of Christian renewal and be fitting instruments to help other people come to a special understanding of a life of prayer, study and action.

The MCC Exercise is based on the Cursillo, a similar weekend experience which has been a powerful instrument for renewal in the lives of hundreds of thousands of people in the Catholic and Episcopal Churches.

Rev. Elder Richard Vincent was Spiritual Director; Rev. Jeffrey Pulling, Assistant Spiritual Director; Rev. Richard Mickley, Director; and Terry Bonnett was Assistant Director. The other team members, all from MCC L.A., were William Bansbach, Fred Conwell, Carl Easter, Larry Hathaway, Patrick Mitchell, Gerald Rawson, Betsy Redding, Jerri Slifer.

The 42 participants in the first MCC Exercise in Christian Community Living agreed that it was a richly rewarding spiritual experience. Many indicated that it would mark the beginning of a new understanding of Christian living and be the impetus for living a new kind of life with God and their fellow Christians.

Inquiries for further information should be directed to Rev. Mickley or Rev. Vincent at the Fellowship offices. The Exercise is a one-time experience, always conducted in such a way as to present a certain set message and a definite method for living a conscious and growing Christian life. The weekend includes talks, discussions and activities as well as prayer and meditation.

Inquiries indicate that there is an interest in having the Exercise introduced in other areas of the Fellowship. To preserve its authenticity and insure its fruitfulness, its spread will be under the direction of the Board of Elders.

What the Exercise Meant to Me

By Patrick Mitchell

The first Exercise in Christian Community Living was held January 16-17-18 at Hidden Trails Ranch, just outside Los Angeles.

As the Exercise participants began to arrive on that dark and chilly Friday evening, one could feel the charge of anticipation in the air. As more and more vehicles arrived at the parking lot and people began meeting and settling down for the weekend, it was quite evident that we were all anticipating something, though we could not exactly express what this anticipation was.

The Team Leaders had prepared for over six months for this exercise. They studied together, they prayed together, and finally they acted together - and what grand results were evident by Sunday night.

The Exercise candidates (participating ministers and lay people) knew that somehow this was supposed to be like a retreat, but with a "new twist." They weren't quite sure what the format would be, but they came with open hearts and minds and were determined to participate fully in this Exercise in Christian Community Living. And participate, they did.

The Exercise got off to a fine start Friday evening with several speakers, an orientation, and Chapel Service. By Saturday morning, everyone was actively seeking more of the Exercise program and we all settled down to discussion groups, talks by ministers and lay people, various interesting and thought provoking exercises to make the meaning of our discussions more alive for all of us, and Chapel Services in which we all felt a true kinship and presence of God.

As the day progressed, it was evident that many things were happening to each one of us. We were changing our attitudes, we were changing our values, and we were provoked to think. All the while, we could feel the presence of God - probably the most exciting discovery of all for candidates, team leaders, and ministers.

God was with us. God was everywhere, in every action and conversation, reflected in the faces of the faithful who came hoping for a revelation.

We talked of how we could become better Christians, how we could improve our communications with God, and in so doing, improve our communication with each other. We prayed together earnestly and with humility, and God did answer our prayers. " Oh, Say But I'm Glad."

All of us learned more about the nature of God and of the

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JESUS SAID ===

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nations of MCC and of Rev. Ms. Weymouth, although most of the clergy voiced attitudes that ranged from mildly critical to friendly.

The most disquieting result of the clerics' get-together was a warning phoned to a member of the Gold Coast congregation that police had begun to question people in local gay bars and intended to question anyone who attended MCC services at Mermaid Beach (Gold Coast) the following Sunday. Another warning was received soon afterward that, if Rev. Ms. Weymouth persisted in conducting services in the teeth of "public disapproval," a gang of straight bikers (not identified) intended to "hit" the hall and beat up anyone present.

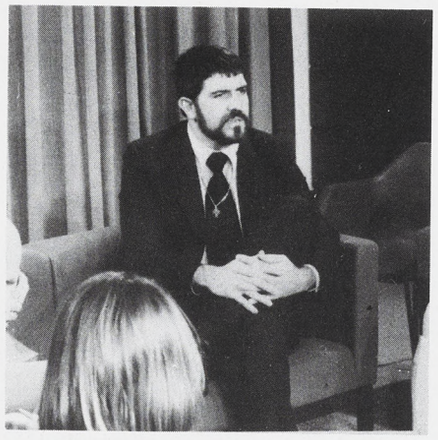
On January 30, the "Gold Coast Bulletin" followed the first article with another in which the Reverend Weymouth answered the criticisms made against MCC and against herself. Her statements were temperate but forthright, and clarified several misconceptions which had been voiced by the local clergy.

On legal advice obtained in Brisbane, all members who attended the threatened service at Mermaid Beach were given a duplicate typed statement to the effect that the bearers were under legal advice, and that, by attending the service, no breach of statute or other law was being committed, and that, if questioned by police, they were obliged only to give names and addresses. Rev. Weymouth advised the attending members to fill in the forms, to keep them handy, and to hand them quietly to the police if questioned. She also warned strongly, again on legal advice, against any member engaging in argument or dispute with the police, whatever the provocation.

Just before the service began, Rev. Weymouth also exhorted all members present to refrain from counter-violence of any form, if intruders disrupted the service. She said if the threatened attack materialized, she would direct the congregation to kneel with her in prayer, adding that she did not believe any intruders would harm people at prayer.

The outcome was pure anticlimatic. If any local police came to Mermaid Beach, they were unseen by anyone at the service or afterward. Nor did the threatened attack eventuate.

The unpleasantness at Gold



Coast has taught many members of the study groups there and in Brisbane that the worst enemy of gay people is *fear* and that no threat is so bad that it cannot be met by common sense and firm gay solidarity.

One unexpected result of the day's tension was that two participants reached the decision of a final, unconditional commitment to MCC — one, after much heart-searching, involving a break from a lifemate's involvement with an established church, and an immediate and consequential threat to his employment by a religious organization of the same church.

Apart from religious reasons, the decisions of both men had been crystalized by the events of the day, the inspiring examples of leadership they had seen in Brisbane and Gold Coast, and the simultaneous but independent realization that it was time to decide where they truly belonged.

Another benevolent aftermath of "Threat Day" at Mermaid Beach is a rollicking new version of the early women's suffragette rallying song, "Shoulder to Shoulder," and of "We Shall Overcome," the well-loved spiritual which has given strength and endurance to another minority group.

The new words to both tunes are reverent, but also relevant to gay liberation, to MCC, and to the special needs of Christian homosexuals. If they contain a thread of militancy, it exists only in a religious and spiritual context, and in the belief that gay Christians need hymns that inspire courage to meet challenges of the gay situation as well as bring religious comfort.

In other news, I am happy to report that we are quietly in the process of setting up a new work in South Africa. Because of the oppression against gay men and women in that country at present, the Board of Elders feels we cannot give the name and address of the minister who is working to see the ministry of our Fellowship established there. However, if you have friends who you think might be interested in the Fellowship in South Africa, by all means please send that information to the Board of Elders. We will see that it is transmitted to our minister in Johannesburg.

I have received a letter from that person this week and they write: "Already so many have shown interest in a study group and also in a Sunday 'family style' worship service. So I am trying to get things lined up. We will see some of the key folk on Saturday night, and many of my lover's friends and both of our families are also very thrilled about our church future. I really appreciate your prayers. So far they know this to be a church FOR ALL.

"My lover has four weeks vacation, during which time we will probably go to Johannesburg, so please let me have those contacts as soon as possible. And, this will also help us to make contacts, together. Two of the Sacramento Exhorters have planned to spend a vacation with us and help us get things organized. I am sure by the time they get here after Easter we should have the services in progress and I know they will be a tremendous blessing to the people. I have spent hours explaining the situation and the planned program. They understand and are challenged by the whole prospect.

"By now I am sure Freda (Rev. Elder Freda Smith) has shared with you Sacramento's desire to raise funds toward my

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THE GAY CHRISTIAN

A journal of theological reflection from Metropolitan Community Church

SCOTT on
GAY PARENTS

WELLS on
BLACK THEOLOGY

BARSTOW on
ANDROGYNOUS SEXUALITY

Reflections of a Gay

by FRANK SCOTT

AS I STOOD GAZING DOWN AT LYDIA'S FACE, FLUSHED AND PINCHED WITH THE INTENSE HEAT FROM WITHIN, THE FULL WEIGHT OF BEING SEPARATED FROM MY CHILDREN SETTLED ON ME.

ACROSS THE NATION and around the world, closet doors are opening. Gay people are "coming out" in increasing numbers, openly ackowledging their sexual orientation and striving to cope with the problems this may present. There are even signs of a real, if grudging, toleration on the part of society for a sexual minority which has been little understood and widely exploited. One aspect of this phenomenon which has been scarcely explored is the sudden explosion in numbers of gay women and men with children.

It is probably safe to say that there have always been gay parents. The difference today is in the number of parents who are openly admitting they are gay. Consequently, there is a new climate of attitude and activity which insists that being gay does not disqualify us from being responsible parents. Lesbian mothers, for example, have traditonally been denied custody of their children because their sexual preference makes them unfit mothers, or so the courts have decreed. Increasingly, gay women are refusing to submit to this defamation and are fighting for custody of their children. The battle has only begun, but there is as much significance in the fact that the battle is being fought as there will be in the victories which will be won.

My perspective as a gay father is shaped by the emotional realities of my situation, as well as by the legal technicalities. In our society, fathers, whether gay or straight, are rarely awarded custody of their children. A man who breaks the bonds of a heterosexual marriage and moves into the gay life automatically has two strikes against him as a parent. First, he's simply on the wrong side of the argument. His wife gets the children and he gets visiting rights and financial support payments. In addition, he is labeled the offender in the marital disintegration, by virtue of his sexual preference, and his parental relationship is called into question. The overriding fear seems to be that he will seduce his children, emotionally if not physically, into acceptance of homosexuality as a valid alternative. Gay is still a four-letter word.

Looking back over my experience, I can see how I set myself up to take a fall. I married my high school girlfriend when we finished college. We had been dating for over six years and it was the natural, expected next step. At that time I had not yet admitted to myself that I was a homosexual, although I realized there was something different about me. Naively, I assumed that marriage would solve the problem of my "queer" sexual interest. And so it seemed to — for awhile. Children began arriving with alarming regularity, however, and five years later I found myself the father of three beautiful little girls. I also found myself becoming increasingly involved with the gay life, nurtured in secrecy and guilt. By this time my marriage was beginning to fray around the edges. To complicate matters further, I was serving as pastor of a Baptist church and was constantly in fear of someone discovering my hidden life and exposing me to ridicule and shame.

Coming out of the turmoil of that period was my first decision as a gay parent: my children must never know. For the sake of the children (as well as for the sake of family, friends, church, etc.), I would conceal my sexual identity and would strive to hold together the tattered fragments of a marriage. In retrospect it was a decision which was both cowardly and unwise, but it was the best I could do at the time. Each day became a nightmare of desire and guilt, of conflict and fear. The marriage became a hollow shell, inhabited by two unhappy people who never dared name the something which had grown up between them, as fixed and solid as a wall.

In this beleagured conditon I endured for eight more years. Each year brought a growing acceptance of myself as a homosexual. Each year brought new burdens of guilt and fear of discovery. Each year brought additional problems to a marriage which was now one prolonged crisis. Each year brought new difficulties in balancing my two lifestyles and still finding time to spend with my children. My growing sense of failure as a parent colored all my experiences and trapped me in an emotional vise. My daughters were rapidly becoming the major casualities in my running battle with the world, the flesh, and myself.

The past ten months have brought many changes to my life. My wife and I separated, after acknowledging the futility of struggling to preserve a legal relationship which was meaningless. I resigned from my church and, after some months of drifting, found my way to MCC. I met a man and discovered the full impact of love and commitment in a gay lifestyle. And I rediscovered my children.

My daughters are Debbie, 12, Becky, 10, and Lydia, 7. They spend every Saturday with me and my lover. On occasion they sleep over, in their sleeping bags on the living room floor. Cliff and I try to make this quality time, since

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Frank Scott is Pastor of Metropolitan Community Church, Pittsburgh, Pa, where he formerly served churches of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Parent

the quantity is so limited. In a real sense we are both involved in being gay parents. We attempt to devise ways to make our time together interesting and yet together. In the past few weeks we have toured the zoo (twice!), ridden a ski lift, played on swings and explored a rocky river bank. Frequently on Saturday afternoons, we all cuddle on the floor and watch Tarzan movies on TV. Always they help prepare dinner and participate in the clean-up afterward. Typical after-dinner time finds Cliff sitting cross-legged on the kitchen floor with Debbie and Becky playing Jacks (he can't get past foursies). I am reclining in a bean bag chair with Lydia, teasing and laughing and just being together. On this day we are a family for a few hours — for a few *hours.*

The end result of these moments of sharing has been a deepening of the relationship between the girls and myself. We are really in process of discovering each other as persons. This makes the time element even more difficult to cope with. Lydia has commented twice recently that Saturday is the shortest day of all. We try to compensate for this by visiting on the telephone several times a week. But the stark fact remains that our time together weekly may be measured in terms of minutes and hours.

Being a gay parent in this context has brought an anguish of the spirit which I would not have believed possible. For the first time I find myself truly on the sidelines of my childrens' lives — hearing second hand, being shut out, missing the joys and crises of daily life. Early in May, Lydia developed a dangerously high fever and was rushed to the hospital emergency room. I accidently heard about this just a short time after it occurred and I hurried over to the hospital myself. As I stood gazing down at Lydia's face, flushed and pinched with the intense heat from within, the full weight of being separated from my children settled on me. This time I was here, but what about next time? What about the cut fingers, the hurt feelings? What about the happy adventures I would be missing, or would hear about as an afterthought? What about Becky with her nightmares which brought her to me for

With this issue, The Gay Christian *reappears — now from its new editorial home in Hartford, Connecticut. And now an official publication of the Department of Publications of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches.*

TGC is a journal of religious reflection for Gay Christians. We hope to stimulate discussion and inquiry on matters that make a difference for you and me. Some issues, like this one, will be potpourris of reflections out of the lives and thoughts of Christians facing the implications of Gay life. Other issues will be devoted to single topics. Such forums, we trust, will satisfy the broad theological spectrum represented by our readership — not by avoiding issues or fearing controversy — but by offering a balance of differing, significant *statements. TGC will be fair. And exciting.*

TCG hopes also to serve as a soundingboard for the theological exploration conducted by the Commission on Faith, Fellowship and Order. FFO will be reporting regularly in these pages.

We invite your contributions. Articles will be selected for publication on the basis of quality: credible scholarship, adequate documentation, readable style, and relevance to the concerns of Gay Christians. An issue devoted to the charismatic movement within UFMCC is in preparation: we particularly solicit articles on that subject.

Without apology, we assert our publication is a most important one. We are, perforce, pioneers. Our unique call summons us to the cutting edge. The journey of the People of God leads us to where we have never been before, and we cannot be permitted to back seat. We must lead the way. That, I am sure, requires the best imagination we've got. It must engage all our sensibilities. Because the Spirit has not ceased to speak in the church.

We invite you to listen, and reflect, with TGC.

—fjd

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THE GAY CHRISTIAN
A journal of theological reflection from Metropolitan Community Church

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The appearance of any name in this magazine does not indicate the sexual/affectional preference of the person.

F. Jay Deacon, editor and layout

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comfort and protection against the terrors of the night? Suddenly I felt this sense of separation acutely and I turned aside to weep — for them, for me and for the nameless dread of the uncertain future.

One major result of the developing relationship with my children is that I have been forced to reconsider my decision about not telling them that I am gay. I first became aware of the new problem when Cliff and I found ourselves consciously avoiding a passing touch or a word of love out of fear of what the children might think. Somehow, being "out" is incomplete if I have to continue to hide from my children. Kids are so very perceptive; they pick up things which most adults would never notice. There is some evidence that they are beginning to pick up the fact that my relationship with Cliff is somehow different from just another friend. There have been passing comments, for example, about Daddy and Cliff sleeping in the same bed. After much thought and discussion, with Cliff and with a child psychologist, I decided that it was time to tell the kids about me.

This presented yet another dilemma: how to tell them? I prepared a nice little speech about the different kinds of love and how two men or two women can really love each other. Two difficulties have prevented my talking with them. One is my own fear. I am genuinely afraid of their reaction. After finding this new closeness, it is extremely threatening to think of facing some form of rejection if this information is too much for them to handle emotionally. Society has already begun its insidious brainwashing regarding "queers" and "fags." The second difficulty is that my wife is equally determined that the children will never know about their father's shameful (in her eyes) conduct. To date this remains an impasse. Eventually I must have this discussion with the girls, however painful or threatening it may be. If their mother refuses to yield at this point, then I shall have to risk it all and go it alone. Whatever happens, I strongly feel that there is no room in my relationship with them for the secrecy and sense of guilt which has haunted me most of my life.

My experience as a gay parent, facing the unique problems inherent in the role, is just beginning. Ahead of me lies that battery of questions which must inevitably arise from my attempt to be honest with my children. Ahead of me, no doubt, are problems of many kinds, as yet unknown but not unexpected. Ahead of me, too, lie experiences of sharing insights gathered from my gay lifestyle. I would not attempt to shape or influence my daughters in the area of their sexual preference, but I do intend to help them understand and accept the validity of the gay alternative.

It is difficult to generalize about the task and problems facing gay parents. Gay women face difficulties, legal and emotional, which are unique to their situation. Gay men, on the other hand, have their own set of problems as they strive to fulfill their parental responsibilities. The common denominator is that we are all striving to be the best possible parents to our children. We desire to guide them around some of the pitfalls which tripped us and we want to be present to bind up the wounds inflicted by life. We all face the question of whether or not to reveal ourselves to our children. In some degree, most of us face some form of alienation or separation from them, particularly in the case of broken marriage.

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF A LOVING, CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, GAY PARENTS CAN BUILD STRONG, MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH THEIR CHILDREN.

There is a growing need for ministry in this area of the gay community. As MCC moves to meet this need, a first step will be to assess the situation at the local level. Each pastor and worship coordinator should seek to be aware of the gay parents and gay family units in the congregation, as well as those in the gay community at large who might benefit from such ministry. If necessary, church leaders should educate themselves regarding the problems gay parents encounter. The church hopefully will become the focal point for counseling and referral. Accordingly there must be an awareness of community resources — agencies and individuals who are qualified to counsel in this area and are capable of dealing constructively within a gay context.

Another avenue of ministry might be through some kind of small group activity for gay parents. Led by the pastor or some other qualified person, this would function as a cross between a rap session and a consciousness-raising group. Here would be an opportunity for gay parents to share their experiences, their problems and possible solutions. It can be quite helpful at times just to have someone to talk with who really understands the pressures and potentials of your situation. The use of small groups need not be limited to large congregations. Wherever there are five or six persons who are interested in participating, this can be an effective tool of ministry.

There are some gay parents who are able to bring their children to church with them. Local MCC groups need to be sensitive to the needs of the children as well as their parents. Sunday school classes should be organized, even if only one child is involved. An activity of this nature will encourage other parents to bring their children with them. A bountiful ministry awaits us as we begin to look to this neglected area.

I am convinced that being a parent can be as great a blessing and as much a source of joy for a gay person as for a heterosexual person. It is unfortunate that, as in my case, the parental relationship for gays is generally involved with emotional trauma and legal difficulties. Beyond the problems however, or in spite of them, with the assistance of a loving, Christian fellowship, gay parents can build strong, mutually beneficial relationships with their children. This is one gay parent who is committed to that goal.

ANDROGYNOUS SEXUALITY

by PAUL BARSTOW

THE TOPIC I have been asked to address is bisexuality. I would prefer the notion of androgynous sexuality, or just sexuality unprefexed. But I suppose "bi-sexuality" is the word our current dialect is stuck with — supposedly occupying the undistributed middle, mediating between heterosexuality and homosexuality (each so designated as exclusive of the other, despite Kinsey's sliding scale). I would undertake a definition of "bisexuality" as the human condition of experiencing erotic attraction to men and women, or, expanding resonance, the capacity or propensity to love and/or desire sexual intimacy with other persons of both genders (note the "both" rather than "either").

Let me be specific at the start. A positive concept of bisexuality implicitly proposes, and I affirm, the positive values in human life of multiple and simultaneous loving relationships with a sexual component. And I would judge further that a positive concept of bisexuality implicitly declines, and projects as inferior in human value, exclusive or sequentially exclusive loving and/or sexual relationships confined to a single natural or conditioned gender alignment, whether heterosexual or homosexual. In these terms, I see bisexuality as a state of being persistently open to the possibility of sexual relationship with partners of either sex, the gender of the other person being a surely significant factor but not an over-riding one, perhaps more important than age, height, weight or hair color but, equally, perhaps less important than temperament, personality and character (as well as circumstances) in determining the force and degree of attraction to intimacy.

Dr. Barstow is a college teacher, director and actor, and was a founding member of MCC/Boston. The article was originally prepared for the Task Force on Human Sexuality of the Metropolitan Community Church of Boston.

Here I feel it necessary to pause and note a curious and disturbing phenomenon almost more prevalent in the gay subculture than in straight society: the assumption, even the dictum, that each individual must at some point in her/history, in or out of the closet, take a genderal-affection loyalty-oath. "The good gay is the exclusive gay," say many, even in the congregations of the Metropolitan Community Church; and the gay who does not totally shun heterosexual relationships is thought not one of the faithful but a betrayer of the cause. Androgynous sexuality refuses this limitation on the potential range and depth of ways in which persons of both sexes can be warm, tender, loving and giving to each other.

My advocacy of bisexuality, as I have earlier defined it, comes out of the context of a wider view of human sexuality. In one of his sermons at MCC-Boston the Rev. Jeffrey Pulling joked about my too frequent use of the expression, "It's Heaven!" when I like something. But I take seriously the Biblical assertion that in heaven (among those resurrected bodies) they neither marry nor are given in marriage. Human sexuality seems to me a natural and good thing, neither a fearful ogre to be kept at bay by enormous expenditure of psychic energy and moral fortitude, no, on the other hand, the highest and holiest mystery of life, death and human relationship. Rather than evil

THE PROJECTED AND CULTURALLY EXPERIENCED ANTI-SEXUALITY OF THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION IS AN INTOLERABLE BURDEN ON, AND A PRINCIPAL OBSTACLE TO, HEALTHY AND HAPPY ENJOYMENT OF THE SEXUAL ASPECT OF PERSONHOOD AND RELATIONSHIP IN OUR SOCIETY.

propensity or summum bonum, I regard sexuality as a force and potential within creatures which draws them powerfully towards others with the promise of a pleasure bond, whether in simple gratification of a neural itch or in

IT IS AN EVER-PRODUCTIVE SOURCE OF CONFLICT, PAIN AND LOSS, EXACERBATING EVERY GRIEF OF UNREQUITED LOVE, SEPARATION, DIVORCE, DEATH — EVERY RUPTURE OF RELATIONSHIP — AND CONFUSING AND CONFOUNDING MOST GENUINE INTERPERSONAL COMMITMENT.

the infinite complexities of a total intimacy. I hope it can be assumed and understood that the wider and more inclusive androgynous sexuality I advocate should exist or come into being under an ethic of loving responsibility for the well-being of the other.

If my premises about the nature of sexuality can be accepted, at least for argument's sake, I go on to posit that most of the difficulties and anxieties which beset various expressions of human sexuality are culturally and societally created. The corrolary is that some cultures and societies, both historical and contemporary, manage far better than others in creating and sustaining an ethos in which the sexual nature of personhood functions as an enhancement of human happiness and well-being. I further posit that the projected and culturally experienced anti-sexuality of the Judeo-Christian tradition is an intolerable burden on, and a principal obstacle to, healthy and happy enjoyment of the sexual aspect of personhood and relationship in our society today. It is this general problem to which the MCC-Boston task-force on human sexuality is addressing its sessions. And with this prefatory over-all view of the context, I return to the topic of bi-sexuality or androgynous sexuality.

It must be obvious that I accept the notions of Marcuse and Brown that the original and natural condition of the human being, still seen in infant and child, is what they have (perversely) called "polymorphus perverse." Sexual gratification is sought instinctively, but the ways in which that gratification is achieved are learned.

Our culture puts an enormous amount of social energy into programming for very strictly regulated channels of sexual gratification. Its projected ideal has been for each individual the discovery, in late adolescence, of

IT SEEMS TO BE THAT THE MONOSEXUAL IDEAL IN STRAIGHT CULTURE AND ITS MIRROR IMAGE IN GAY CULTURE BOTH REQUIRE ROLES AND ARE INHERENTLY SEXIST AND DIVISIVE.

a person of the opposite sex with whom, after a chaste courtship ritual, marriage allows a sexual relationship which should culminate in a host of grandchildren surrounding the deathbed of the still-constant loving couple. The manly man and womanly woman are to find in each other the perfect life-time partner who totally fulfills every allowed sexual need, along with most other needs of intimate relationship in a society where the nuclear family is very nearly the sole remaining source of community. Now I emphasize this tyrannous ideal (and recognize that some people achieve it and are blissfully contented by it — bless their hearts) because in our culture every other possibility of human sexual relationship is traditionally valued in terms of its approach to this model. For a single example, somewhat distant on the spectrum, conservative elements in the gay community hope for acceptance of homosexual marriage by the society because, except for the never-engendered children and grandchildren, the same image of fidelity till death is hopefully put forward for approval.

The baneful consequences of this radically limiting ideal seem to me everywhere apparent. It is, in my view, an ever-productive source of conflict, pain and loss, exacerbating every grief of unrequited love, separation, divorce, death — every rupture of relationship — and confusing and confounding most genuine interpersonal commitment. (And the poor, merely good little relationship is most likely to be ruptured precisely because it isn't that ideal. We throw away love at the first, fleeting glimpse of will-of-the-wisp true love.) The idolization of the model of a single, all-sufficient love/sex relationship stigmatizes every other possibility of relationship, homosexual or heterosexual, in marriage or outside marriage, life-long or temporary. Most of us are taught to torture ourselves daily with wondering where or how we went wrong because our lives don't fulfill this pattern the culture sets before us. Social misfits and sinners, we deny ourselves and others both simple joys and the complex foundations of happiness because by some cruel quirk of fate our love/sex sweepstake ticket didn't have this one right number, or we lost or misplaced the ticket.

SEXUAL LOVE CHANNELED ONLY TOWARD ONE SEX, WHICHEVER ONE, GRADUALLY CONSTITUTES A DENIAL OF WHOLE AND FULL PERSONHOOD TO THE OTHER GENDER, JUST AS IT DENIES FULL PERSONHOOD TO THE SELF BY TRUNCATING ITS POSSIBILITIES OF AFFECTIONAL RESPONSE.

It seems to me that the monosexual ideal in straight culture and its mirror image in gay culture both require roles and are inherently sexist and divisive. Jane and John, Jane and Jane or John and John are necessarily fulfilling role concepts in themselves and each other. The projected idea of the perfect match/mate dictates that each individual attempt to

possess, and attempt to project, role alignment in both sexual and non-sexual aspects of relationship. Successive possible interactions with other people of either sex, however happy, comfortable, supportive or fulfilling, are rejected or deliberately impoverished because they do not conform to this *soi disant* ultimate ideal. Anyone who has loved or been loved in this bondage must, I suppose, be conscious of the awesome total responsibility for another's sexual happiness projected and/or accepted in it. And so people try to play out each other's fantasies while preserving their own wistful dreams.

These role limitations of monosexuality are accepted conditioning at best, neurotic or psychotic at worst, but seldom correspondent to the reality of separate persons honestly responding to their own and the other's real and intricately varied needs and desires under particular circumstances and at specific times. And if they actually do so, once even an approximation of the ideal match/mate relationship has been found or pretended, the demon of jealousy is summoned as a proof of love. To possess the beloved entirely and exclusively is the goal set and applauded. The culture exalts jealousy — the fear, the humiliation, the degredation and the double or triple hatred (of self, rival and love-object) — this sickening emotion triggered by the frustration of the desire for total and exclusive possession is made a yardstick by which to measure love. Here, perhaps more than anywhere else, I see the violation of love's most genuine imperative — the preference and pursuit of the good of the beloved above one's own.

Now if my stance is over-against all this programming, idealization, role-playing and jealous possessiveness, what am I standing for? I suppose I am an advocate of *openness* to loving relationship (including sex) whenever it is appropriate to the situations, needs and desires of the persons involved — productive of, or contributing to, their well-being, their happiness and their mutual fulfillment. I entirely agree with Marc Fasteau that there is "no logical stopping point in the progression from social intimacy to physical affection to sex." I see the possibility of an emerging culture in which the idolatry of sexuality is replaced by the humane consideration of sex as a channel of affirmation of the whole personhood of each partner, an extension to the bodies we inhabit of the concern and caring, the warmth and tenderness, the encounter with and exploration of each other, and the mutual, joyful self-giving which characterize both love and friendship when they are most like each other.

I am persuaded that this openness to sexual intimacy should extend to both genders as a natural bridge between our separateness and the constricting roles which have so consistently created hostilities, fears and anxieties. At the ends of all those idolatrized appendages and aperatures are persons — the proper use of the organs and orifices is satisfying to unite these persons rather than themselves. If what is sought and confirmed is a relationship of whole persons, the nature of body alignment is the means not the end. And let me add that in speaking of sexual relationship (bi- or mono-) I am concerned with far more — or should I say often less? — than genital interlock, of whatever sort.

THE IDOLIZATION OF THE MODEL OF A SINGLE, ALL-SUFFICIENT LOVE/SEX RELATIONSHIP STIGMATIZES EVERY OTHER POSSIBILITY OF RELATIONSHIP...

The ethics of the conduct of bi-sexual or multiple relationships is another subject for another article. For example: asked if, in the context of an I-Thou relationship, I encounter a person/lover whose concept of fidelity differs from mine in terms of exclusive-

(From) EPIPSYCHIDION

I never was attached to that great sect,
Whose doctrine is, that each one should select
Out of the crowd a mistress or a friend,
And all the rest, though fair and wise, commend
To cold oblivion, though it is in the code
Of modern morals, and the beaten road
Which those poor slaves with weary footsteps tread,
Who travel to their home among the dead
By the broad highway of the world, and so
With one chained friend, perhaps a jealous foe,
The dreariest and the longest journey go.

True love in this differs from gold and clay,
That to divide is not to take away.
Love is like understanding, that grows bright,
Gazing on many truths ... Narrow
The heart that loves, the brain that contemplates,
The life that wears, the spirit that creates
One object, and one form, and builds thereby
A sepulchre for its eternity.

—Percy Bysshe Shelley

ness, "What would you do?", I can only reply, "Weigh the possibility of changing my 'set' or genuinely convincing the other person to change her/his 'set,' or else avoid involvement to the hurt of the other. I suppose one tries to give off clear signals or return honest answers, taking responsibility for oneself and others in appropriate balance." I would invite another to embrace my viewpoint before embracing me. But I have no desire to impose my perspective, though, by the same token, I reject the imposition of another perspective on me. In adopting a principle we must accept the consequences of its acting-out. What I am fundamentally asserting is the positive legitimacy of bi-sexuality (and its concomitant of multiple and non-possessive/exclusive relationships) in an assumed context of situational ethics.

Manifestly, such views as mine come out of experience as well as reflection on that experience and on the report of others. I have been persuaded by my own experience that sexual love channeled only toward one sex, whichever one, gradually constitutes a denial of whole and full personhood to the other gender, just as it denies full personhood to the self by truncating its possibilities of affectional response. I regard sexuality as a marvelous agency for the knowledge of ourselves and others, as well as for the caring/sharing experience of genuine love in the infinite variety of its manifestations. To preclude or deny the possibility of a sexual manifestation of affection for another person is to limit the full dimensionality of possible relationship at the deepest levels of selfhood.

So I project a glimpsed vision of that heaven where we love each other, male, female and androgynous and share the gift and giving of our whole selves. And here and now I hope for a new community of persons who are loving and ready to love others whose loveliness is manifest to them. That loveliness is neither of the body (however beautifully male or female), nor of the mind (however brilliantly masculine or feminine), nor of the soul (however nobly manly or womanly), nor of any other single portion or aspect of the other self, but of the whole person, and such persons cannot only love their lovers but, *thank* HEAVEN, can want them to love each other.

I SEE THE POSSIBILITY OF AN EMERGING CULTURE IN WHICH THE IDOLATRY OF SEXUALITY IS REPLACED BY THE HUMANE CONSIDERATION OF SEX AS A CHANNEL OF AFFIRMATION OF THE WHOLE PERSONHOOD OF EACH PARTNER, AN EXTENSION TO THE BODIES WE INHABIT, OF THE CONCERN AND CARING, THE WARMTH AND TENDERNESS, THE ENCOUNTER WITH AND EXPLORATION OF EACH OTHER, AND THE MUTUAL, JOYFUL SELF-GIVING WHICH CHARACTERIZE BOTH LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP WHEN THEY ARE MOST LIKE EACH OTHER.

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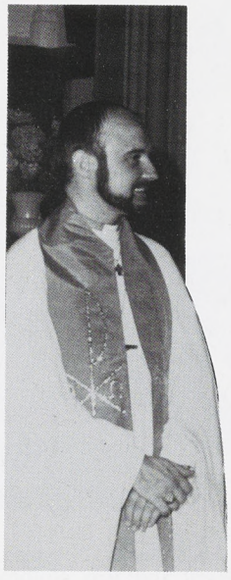
"I AM THE PASTOR"

by The Rev. Stan Harris



I am a woman or a man, aged between 21 and 90 years old.

I have been called by the Creator to minister to the People of God.

Why was the call directed to me? I can't tell. Often I ponder this, particularly when things go bad. But always the answer is the same, "I called you. It is enough for you to know this."

I live on the Christian charity of my congregation, for this is the only way that I can be available to them at all times. The needs are many and varied, sometimes pleasant, often not. But, unlike the police officer, I am not forgiven if I'm not there when needed.

Loneliness is my constant companion. Why did no one think to invite the pastor to that party last Saturday night? Going to the bar is great if you are accompanied by someone. But isn't it strange when you don't know anyone in the room? When was I last invited to someone's home for dinner? November, wasn't it?

I am the pastor. I am single. I am a human being. I have needs, temperament, desires, flashes of inspiration. But I am a human being like any other.

I am the pastor. I have a lover. Sometimes it is so hard to have to go out at night to answer a cry for help and leave my lover at home. And the last time I was invited out, my lover wasn't invited. The other time we went to a party together, everyone fell upon me with flattering comments about my sermon the Sunday before and my lover was ignored, pushed into a corner.

I laugh a lot. Sometimes I weep. Many times I lie awake at night worrying. "Why did an argument develop during the Board meeting? Why didn't that nice couple ever come back to church? Why did that person get so upset with me that they resigned from the finance committee? What did I say or do? Why? "But I am a human being like any other.

I rise early, pray daily, celebrate Holy Communion often (sometimes at home for it gives me strength when I need it most). I deal with correspondence, answer the phone, make appointments, respond to the door bell, hear problems, give advice, have visitors ("Just thought I'd drop in and see how you are, pastor.") (I like those visits especially.) Today I have to contact the Welfare Department at 1:00 p.m.. No lunch today, I guess, and I didn't have time for breakfast this morning. Never mind, I'll eat tonight. Let's see, what time is Bobby's mother coming? 2:15 p.m. Have to hurry at the Welfare Department in order to be back in time. There's the phone. Oh no, why would anyone want to overdose at this time of day. Well, last week it was 3:00 a.m., so I ought to be thankful, I guess.

Sunday. Not so many in church today. Holiday time, parents visiting, good movie on TV, car needs repair, went to the beach, disagreed with you last week, never comin' to church again, etc. etc. Lord, what do I do? What do I say to such strange priorities?

But those who do come, the Faithful, what joy we share in our worship! Oh, the unity of Spirit as we lift our hearts in adoration and love to the author of our very existence. As we rejoice in the salvation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, all the aches and pains disappear. Everything becomes enveloped in a great surge of love from God which overwhelms and refreshes us, giving new life and new purpose to all who open their hearts.

"I laugh a lot. Sometimes I weep. Many times I lie awake at night worrying."

I am the pastor. Apart from this sharing of my thoughts, I never complain. It is sometimes frowned upon if I visit the places where my congregation freely express their personalities. It is often disapproved if I seem to live the kind of life that they live, even in ways they consider quite honorable for themselves. But I am one of them, called from among them to minister to them, yet...?

Being single, if I should happen to fall in love with an unbeliever, I know the unpleasant reaction from the congregation. It happened once. (And the chief accuser was going with a person who tried night and day to keep him from going to MCC.)

I have a lover. I remember the time that separate holidays were unavoidable and how shocked the congregation was when my lover had a pleasant friendship with another person during that time. (And the chief accuser and source of gossip was a person renowned for "threesome" activities.)

Yes, I am the Pastor, servant of God's children. I stand before them each week vested in the robes of my office, a piece of white plastic around my neck. I share with my people the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation. I teach the Word that proceeds from the mouth of God. I may appear holy, great, unshakeable. Yet, spare a thought for my humanity, my frailty, my feelings. In spite of seeming carelessness towards me, I care for all God's children as if they were my own children.

If I had my life to live all over again, I would change nothing. The Grace, the Comfort of God, the Assurance that one is being of use — these things uphold me in the strength and glory of Jesus Christ whom we serve with joy. When the Lord tells me through my tears of frustration, "I called you. It is enough for you to know this," I understand and rejoice.

So, frail though I be, imperfect as I am, difficult as I may be to get along with, ...please love me. ■

(Rev. Harris is pastor of MCC Adelaide, Australia, and Assistant Coordinator of Church Extension in Australia and New Zealand. He is the first minister licenced as an MCC minister in the continent of Australia and New Zealand.)

Pastor Maduka Tours East and South Nigeria

Rev. Sylvanus O. Maduka, Pastor of MCC-Zaria (Nigeria) recently completed an evangelism tour through East and South Nigeria. Here is his report from a letter to Rev. Lee Carlton:

"I am now back in Zaria after visiting the Riverstate and the Southeastern states of Nigeria. There were two reasons for my travel. First, to represent our Fellowship of MCC at the Nigerian Congress on Evangelism, where our message was very well received on 18th December. Secondly, to discuss the possibility of establishing an MCC in many of the Eastern cities and towns.

"My journey was full of happiness and joy as I was being welcomed by all whom I met, even the District and village heads; whom I always spoke with before carrying on with our good message. As I moved out on the tour with my wife, Philomina, and the baby, we had only a little monies on our hands which nearly made our journey to be vary hard; but I thank God who with His power, we were able to accomplish the work required. The people of the East Central State, more especially my own hometown of Eznachi, are very happy to say thanks to you on the help to bring the mission of UFMCC to them and are very anxious to see a church built, where they will be able to worship God in truth and love. Already land has been given by one of the friends of the church who is so eager to see the mission brought to them. I have spoken to many who attended my evening preaching services, which were conducted in the open air at the Methodist School premises, the 21st to 25th December.

"To draw large gatherings of people, I found, was not difficult but of course the hard thing is what can be done afterward to improve their circumstances and give to them the true love we share in Metropolitan Community Church. This is uppermost a burden on my heart. In fact, the major problem of the people is about health. You could just imagine a town with the population of more than 800,000 people having only one doctor and the worst thing the doctor lived about 25 miles from the hospital. I visited the patients at the hospital and could not hold my tears, as a lot of the children were crying and the pregnant women in labour also pleading for help and no nurses to attend to them, and delivering alone on their bed.

"To my surprise, a lot has been done by the government in the Northern states but here in the Eastern state there has been little help and I do not know the reason. However, the government of the East Central State has given the chance to all organizations or individuals who might like to operate or establish anything like hospitals or clinics or other things to assist the people.

"If the Fellowship could concentrate at least to have something done in this part of Nigeria it would be, as I see, the only means of building a stable work. There is no other way I feel we can truly render help, except by establishing a small help centre for the treatment of the sick. If we would have a nurse or a medical attendant who could prescribe drugs for the sick it would be such a great help. We of course would also be happy to have any brother or sister who might like to come to work in Nigeria. Presently, doctors, nurses and other jobs; even technicians of all trades, all these jobs are wanted in Nigeria. Many people are needed in the field of building, engineers, roads, and agriculturist. Women are especially accepted as nurses and teachers. If all the churches in the UFMCC can contribute a little, a big amount will be raised to assist the work of God here.

"I walked through the hospital praying and assisting with the people as much as I could and much to my encouraged faith; God healed many of their complaints. From there, we went further south and visited the Hopeville Centre for the disabled who were disfigured during the Nigeria Civil War and the orphanage for motherless babies.

"The little we had finished at Calabar, South Eastern State, and

Directors of MCC-Zaria (Nigeria). (L-R) Standing — Bro. Felix Maclekee the Church Secretary and Bro. Solomon Richard the Choirmaster. Seated — Bro. Friday Oboro the Director of Music and the Chairperson of the Social Action Committee; Rev. Sylvanus O. Maduka the Pastor of MCC-Zaria; Bro. S. Ogwe the Publicity Secretary and Baptismal Bible Class Teacher; and Bro. Isaiah Ajero the Sunday School Teacher and Church Treasurer.

there was no money for us to pay the hotel room. Yet, thank God, I met one Rev. John Wills and shared my burden with him. He assisted kindly with a sum of 50 Naira (Nigerian money) which took me back to Ogidiua. On our way back, my wife and baby fell sick with fever due to the climatic condition in the area. It was sad, but I had to leave them at Ogidiua as there was no money to travel back to Zaria with and the church could not carry on long without me.

"I wish to thank all the UFMCC who sent Christmas greetings cards and magazines. In fact, I regret much that I did not have money to receive photographs of all the places where we visited both doing my preaching at All Saints in Port Harcourt or the Evangelism Congress, but as you remember there are a few people here who have cameras and one must hire for taking of photos.

"There have been many temptations and difficulties be felt on us this year. First my Father's death and then the motor accident when my leg was hurt by the car and the third, the traveling to Lagos to prepare for my travel to the United States which also encountered many difficulties. Yet, through all these things God has been with us and my happiness of heart is that we have not failed in the work which God gave us to do.

"Today, Metropolitan Community Church in Zaria is the talk of the town. I thank God for giving me the courage to stand these difficulties during these early days when we first started the work of sharing the good news of Christ to the people. I am yet waiting to hear about my travel to the conference in Washington. As it is now, I have worked hard to share the message of MCC but until I am able to see many of the ceremonies and meet with the Elders I can only tell half the story: it is needful to share things in full and with confidence. Especially, we must say our thanks to the Australia MCC for their love offerings and of help. Remember us to the Fellowship family everywhere. ■

"Yours in Lord Jesus Christ."

Donations Needed for MCC Nigeria

On February 13th, a letter was received from Isaiah Ajaero, treasurer of MCC-Zaria, indicating that the church in that country was undergoing serious financial problems. The most recent difficulty is that the owner of the property where MCC services have been held has increased the rent beyond the means of the church and, last December, the owner gave an eviction notice without reason. Brother Isaiah writes:

"Zaria branch of Metropolitan Community Church needs your help for their spiritual and materials stand. Remember us brothers and sisters in your prayers, mostly for this period of our crushing troubles and hardship we are going through. Our faith are still strong in Jesus Christ the Son of God and our Saviour. Strong also to build and hold strongly the MCC in Nigeria. Our feet shall stand for one who has been brought down by his enemy is in a place of disadvantage. Satan is our enemy, it does not want us to prosper. But with faith in Christ we are more than conquerers, truly we shall defeat satan completely. Because to all who received Christ, He gave the right to become the children of God, all they needed to do was to trust Him to Save them.

"So all our troubles are for a short time. Brothers and sisters of MCC, we are seriously seeking for your contributions of help. Financially to build up our own church building. The MCC shall prosper here in Nigeria. Because MCC is the truly church of God, which serves the spiritual needs of people, helps the sick, prisoners, etc. We, the MCC here in Nigeria, shall prosper. The church that Jesus Christ built is the greatest possession that God has in the world. Anyone who contributes to the church welfare is certain to be blessed of God. It is a serious matter if anyone hinders the church progress.

"We Metropolitan Community Church here in Nigeria pray and ask you in Jesus name to help us for our struggle to build our own church building. Your contribution of any amount is needed. We know MCC has come to be in Nigeria and must stay and increase by the name of God. Our next plan is to be assembling in our choirmaster's room, Brother Friday Ogboro, for our weekly activities and Sunday service, until we can afford or build our own church building, which we have estimated to cost N1,000. We ask your help, brothers and sisters of MCC. Glory to God in the highest. Peace on earth to people of good will." ■

Some of the congregation of MCC-Zaria (Nigeria) present at a dedication of a child in August 1975. Mother (uncovered head) and child in center.

Pastor Lee Carlton
MCC Sydney

Pastor Arthur Cazeault
MCC Melbourne

Pastor Jan Weymouth
MCC Gold Coast

Pastor Stan Harris
MCC Adelaide

by Peter Brennan

(Mr. Brennan is an Exhorter, member of MCC Sydney, Australia.)

360 Participate In MCC Conference In Australia

Who said that Australia is down under? Whoever it was should have been at the first MCC District Conference for Australia and New Zealand.

More than 360 persons participated in the five day conference which was hosted by MCC Sydney.

When the Rev. Lee Carlton, our pastor and Coordinator of Church Extension, told us last April that we would convene a conference for all the MCC's of Australia and New Zealand in January, I thought, "This Yankee has more faith than common sense." After all, there were only 14 of us when he and his spouse, Randy, arrived.

When January came and people from all over Australia and New Zealand began pouring in for the Conference, we all saw the hand of God at work. For weeks the Sydney church had been planning, awaiting the arrival of our General Moderator, Rev. Elder Troy Perry, and other guests from the states of Australia and from New Zealand.

Each day of the Conference, held in Australia's mid summer, began with the celebration of Holy Communion and a sermon by one of the ministers. Rev. Art Cazeault of MCC Melbourne challenged us not to reject others in our search for acceptance.

Rev. Jan Weymouth, new interim pastor of MCC Gold Coast, who also holds the distinction of being the first woman licensed for professional MCC ministry outside the United States, exhorted the conference to put action into our testimony of faith.

Rev. Don Mence of the Methodist-Presbyterian Union of New Zealand and Worship Coordinator of MCC Auckland, reaffirmed Christ's acceptance of all people and our call to continue enlightening the established church around us.

Roman Catholic priest, Father Ken Sinclair, celebrated an Agape Mass on Saturday morning. So simple and moving was the worship celebration that there was hardly a dry eye in the assembly as we passed the elements from one to another.

Outstanding workshops were conducted throughout the day by both laypeople and clergy. There were double sessions so that almost everybody was able to attend.

The workshops were: "Ministering to Transexual and Transvestite Persons," by Ms. Renee Hine of MCC Adelaide; "How the Small Church Can Plan Ahead," by the Reverends Lee Carlton and Art Cazeault; "Effective Church Administration," by board members of Melbourne and Sydney; and the Rev. Stan Harris of MCC Adelaide brought us much understanding of the reasons behind liturgy in the workshop, "We Who Worship."

The women of the district presented two beautiful consciousness raising sessions on "Women in the Ministry." They were led by Rev. Weymouth and her spouse, Carol, together with Margaret and Ellen, new team lay-ministers from MCC Newcastle. After the session one of the sisters remarked to me, "Men have oppressed me. Society and the church have oppressed me. But today I learned that Christ has not, does not, and will not oppress. Christ has set me free, so I

won't let my womanhood oppress me, either."

A workshop on "Working With Other Gays" was interrupted by about 18 bible-thumping, anti-MCC demonstrators outside the church. A little later the demonstrators entered the building shouting "Sodomites" and other condemnations. Reverends Perry and Carlton arose to the occasion and within minutes order was restored. Soon a beautiful dialogue developed with the antagonists. Small group discussions sprug up which lasted until late afternoon tea.

Mr. Gary Pye of Acceptance, the national organization of gay Roman Catholics (the counterpart of Dignity in the United States), conducted a session which was well received. He pointed out the need for further in-depth cooperation in the common struggle of us all.

Rev. Elder Perry participated in a forum discussion on "Bridging The Gap With The Established Church." Other clergy were the Reverend Doctor Trichett of the Methodist Church in New South Wales; the Reverend G. Coughlan, and Anglican priest; Rev. Mence and Father Sinclair.

Rev. Perry also conducted two combined meetings on "Understanding the UFMCC" and "Political Action and the UFMCC." This gave our people an opportunity to discuss many of the concerns unique to our vast but relatively sparsely populated district. We also learned some of the social and political accomplishments in the USA by MCC's direct involvement.

Highlights of the conference were the nightly services of spiritual renewal conducted with special music from all the churches and with messages by Rev. Perry. At the close of each service an invitation to commitment was extended. This proved to be a most beautiful experience of sharing and communing together with God. Many of us had never seen such a moving sight as the altar area full of seekers, people praying quietly with each other, dedicating their lives to God's service. Some were weeping gently. For many it meant becoming acquainted for the first time with a Christ they had always heard about, but never knew in a personal way.

The conference business meeting seemed awkward at first as the lay and clergy delegates tried to accustom themselves to procedure. But then, it was our first time to function with some degree of self government, beyond the strong parochial isolation which exists from one city and state to another in our countries of Australia and New Zealand.

The Board of Elders requested a vote of approval of Rev. Carlton as Coordinator of Church Extension in Australasia. Rev. Carlton requested the election of an assistant coordinator and a secretary-treasurer for the district. The results of the voting were: Rev. Carlton, Coordinator; Rev. Stan Harris, assistant coordinator; Warren Harrison, secretary-treasurer.

A budget guideline for District expenditures was adopted. The delegates approved a levy based on attendance to be placed on each church group to fund the district publication, "Outreach," which had heretofore been borne solely by MCC Sydney. "Outreach" presently reaches out to some 700 MCC adherents in Australasia each month with an expected continued growth pattern. The current mailing list has been acquired in nine months' time in an area with a population of only thirteen million.

A ministers' Conference is set during March to be held at MCC Adelaide. The next District Conference will be hosted by MCC Melbourne early in 1977.

With the help of other churches, daily lunches were served and Sydney members planned two conference socials for the District Conference time together. A cabaret dance and show on Saturday evening was attended by some 300 persons. The other social was a most fascinating Harbour Cruise and Disco aboard ship. While cruising around the harbour, we had five hours of love and laughter and finally a time of sad farewell to all the wonderful people from Brisbane to Los Angeles who helped to make this first Australasian District Conference a huge success.

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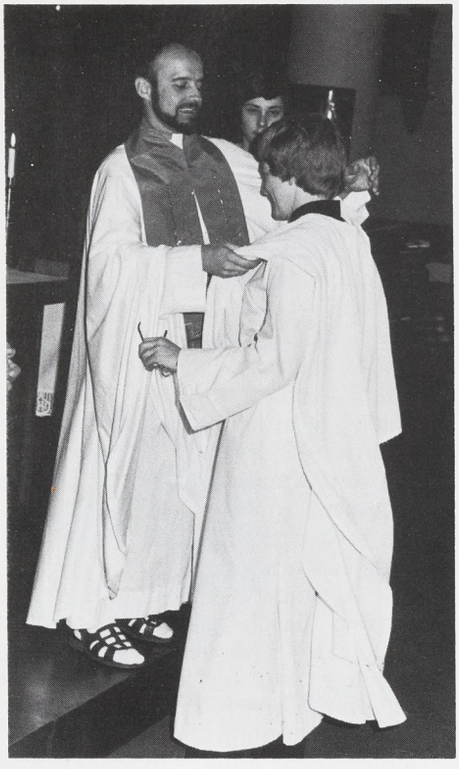

Conferring the chasuble:
"Serve selflessly."

Presenting the Scripture:
"Preach the Gospel."

Laying on of hands:
"Come, Holy Spirit."

Australian Woman Licensed to the Ministry in MCC

MCC Adelaide, Australia, was the scene of a historical event, the first woman minister to be licensed outside the USA in the MCC ministry.

Rev. Jan Weymouth became the first woman licensed as an MCC minister in Australia amid great rejoicing. She was dedicated formally to the ministry amidst Adelaide's rich liturgy in Union Church in Adelaide. The Rev. Stan Harris, Australia's first licensed MCC minister, presided at the ceremony.

Rev. Jan, who is 26 years old, was a Salvation Army Officer for five years. When the Salvation Army expressed disapproval of homosexuality and gay persons in general, both she and her spouse of two years, Ms. Carol O'Keefe, left the Army and were led by the Lord to MCC Adelaide.

Jan's Pastor, Rev. Harris, said, "Jan's Christian love and compassion for others and her obvious qualification on an educational level quickly caught my attention." For a full year, Rev. Jan studied and assisted Rev. Harris as an Exhorter in the Adelaide MCC Mission.

MCC Adelaide is reported to be one of the most liturgical congregations in the Fellowship. The ceremony of recognizing Rev. Jan as a professional minister in the MCC was described this way by an observer, "It seemed only fitting that there should be an appropriately high liturgical service of celebration for Rev. Jan. During the service she was vested in stole and chasuble 'to minister the sacraments and rites of the church to' all God's children. Then she was presented a Bible, a gift from the congregation, 'to preach the Word of God to all God's people without discrimination.' All was accompanied by glittering candles and silvery clouds of incense." The congregation jubilantly sang "Now Thank We All Our God" and broke into

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Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

by Rev. Lee J. Carlton

Beautiful transexual sister, Rene' Hein from MCC Adelaide stood. Her operatic voice filled the church and tears formed in the eyes of the worshippers. The words struck deep, "Yesterday, I pretended that I wasn't gay, but that's a game I cannot play . . ."

Suddenly it was November 1969. As I headed my new Gran Prix onto M28 and across the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, it started to snow. Can't see. Turn on the wipers. Wipers on. Still blurry. You're crying, Carlton. Let it out!

I heard over and over again the words ringing in my ears. They had been uttered only moments before by Bishop Mark Kidder, the District Overseer for Churches of God in Upper Michigan. "You must resign. There's no place for you. Lee, You've been accused of . . ." I interupted, "But I didn't!" He continued, "No one's gonna believe that. Resign. It's for your own good, son. There isn't a church anywhere that would want you now." "How soon?" I asked. "Yesterday would have been better," he replied.

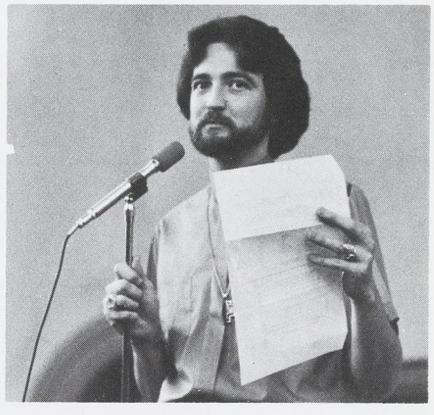
Even the usually vibrant evergreens along Lake Superior's shoreline took on a dull color. Ugly snow, slush, dark clouds . . . almost dark now, still an hour to drive. Think. Think, man, think. How do you tell your wife? What about your daughter? What will I say to my congregation? Will they hate me? Why, God? Why did I ever come here in the first place? There isn't a church anywhere that would want you now. Yesterday would have been better. Yesterday. Yesterday. Here's the church. You're almost home. Stop. Watch that snow bank. Go inside. Pray.

Inside it was warmer. The smell of new carpet and pews pervaded the sanctuary. I wish there were candles burning. It's always more worshipful with candles. God, you helped me build this church. See, there's where I hit my thumb instead of the nail. Why am I suddenly not worthy to preach in this place now? Next Thursday is Thanksgiving. What do I have to thank you for? On my desk, a copy of "Homosexuality Today," and "SOW," the missions magazine for the church. SOW means Save Our World. Who's gonna save me, I thought. Inside first page, a picture of Rev. James L. Slay, Executive Secretary for Church of God World Missions. My, how I respect this man. He's done so much for you, God. "Hi, Reverend, remember me? I'm the kid who asked you about going to Australia. Remember? It was at Northwest College, spring of '66? You said the church needed people more in Nigeria. Remember, you said I needed more experience. Wise old man. You're right. I am too young, too inexperienced. Besides, Brother Slay, I'm a ho . . . homo . . .uh . . .HOMOSEXUAL! And, God can't love me, any, uh, anyway." I'll never say goodbye to another congregation again, because I'll never pastor again. Anyway, there isn't a church that would want me now and yesterday would have been better.

The applause interupted my painful memory. Rene' continued her song, "That all may say, love can show us still, the only way. There need be no more yesterday. There is now no more yesterday."

Today, it's a January, summer, 1976. I'm in Australia. Today I hold many more memories, memories which bring joy mixed with sadness: The creation of the Board of Evangelism and World Mission, which is now World Church Extension, the appointment of missionaries, within the United States and Canada, memories of the days when we had nothing but prayers and love to give Carol Cureton in starting the church in St. Louis, the ten paperback hymnbooks for Clonnie Lambert in Las Vegas, two copies of the by-laws requested by Orlando, $25 for Baltimore (which was kindly returned to be used elsewhere), postage for IN UNITY to Anchorage, a little support for the beginning of the work in Cincinnati, and half a bus ticket for Joe Gilbert in the Prison Ministry.

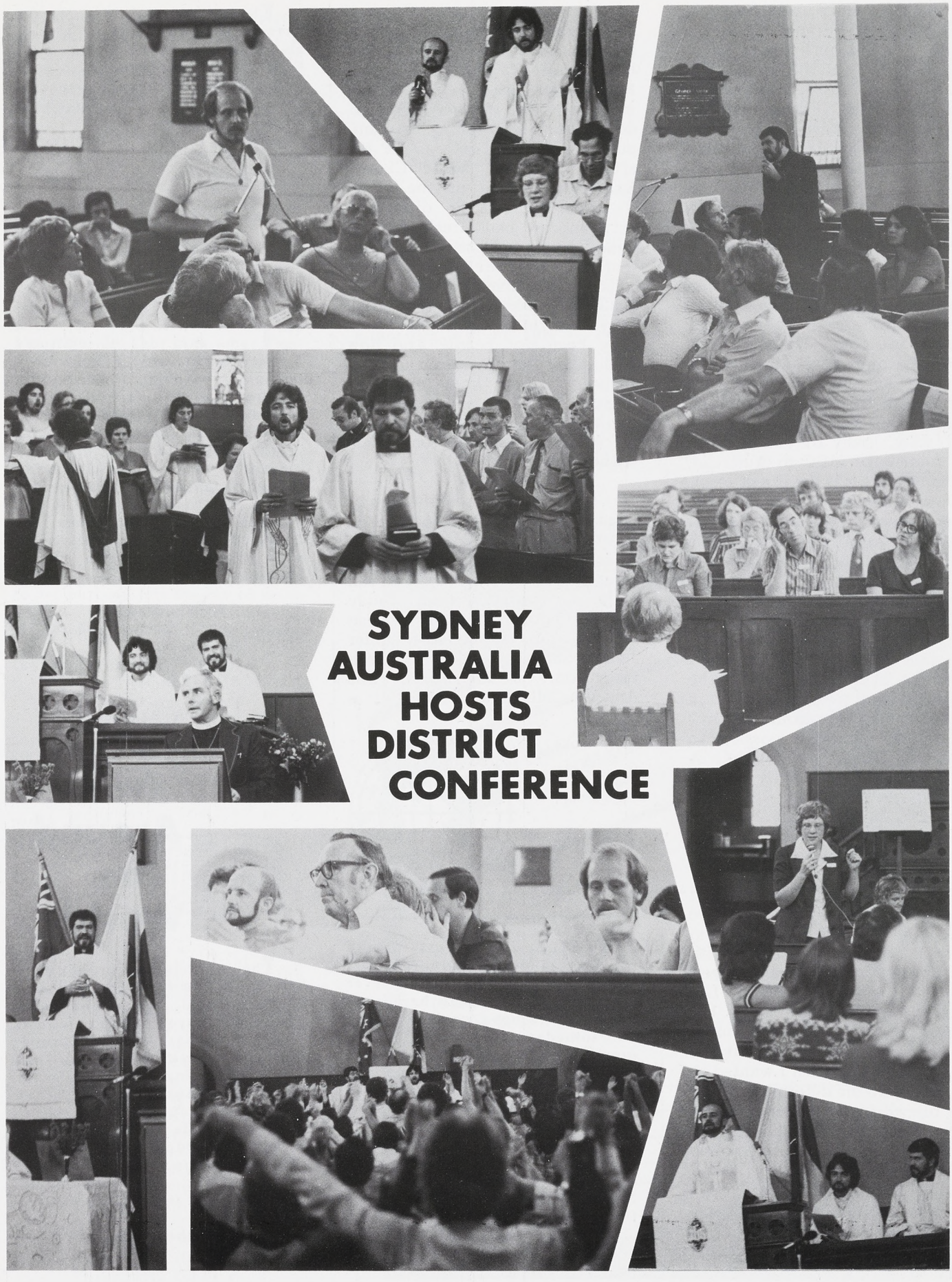
Today, there is no new Gran Prix to drive, just the train or bus. But, lest I should despair over a little inconvenience, I remember, too, the sacrifice of Bob Wolfe in Canada, our first minister to carry Christ's liberation outside the USA. (Never once have I heard him complain.); I think of the work of Jo Abbott and Tom Bigelow in the United Kingdom. I recall Sylvanus Maduka in Nigeria has only his legs for transportation and yet has just hitched and hiked over 2000 miles to represent MCC at the first Nigerian Conference on Evangelism and assess the possibility of establishing MCC in the Eastern African States. (His wife, Philomina and their baby were stricken with jungle fever in Okigiwi, where he had to leave them until he had sufficient funds for their return to Zaria.)



Rev. Lee J. Carlton

Today, open persecution of gay people under Ms. Peron's government in Argentina have halted the efforts of the study group in Buenos Aires. Today I still receive letters from people in southeast Asia, east and west

(Rev. Carlton is pastor MCC Sydney, Australia and Coordinator of Church Extension for Australia and New Zealand.)



SYDNEY AUSTRALIA HOSTS DISTRICT CONFERENCE

Europe as well as from the outback areas of Australia. Today we cannot content ourselves to stand for long in awe at the foot of Mt. Sinai singing "We've Come This Far By Faith," while untold thousands of sisters and brothers yet feel the whip of Pharoah's oppression.

Today, I ask you, too, to remember what those Egyptian ghettos of guilt, self-hate, loneliness and despair did to us before we learned that slaves could be free. Today we must make an even greater effort than yesterday, pool the resources of our present desert journey, broaden our vision, fix our eyes confidently on Canaan, extend our love and compassion to those yet standing on the other side of the Red Sea.

Today, many of you share in the miracle of MCC in Australia. In many ways it is the direct result of your financial investment in the World Church Extension effort of our Fellowship. Support for the Australian church was projected for one year, but has proved necessary for only nine months. Today, the church in Australia is self-supporting. This is clear proof of what can be accomplished when we let our purses attest the concern which we have so often in the past talked about. Why? Because you made it possible to begin the work. SENDING A MISSIONARY TO THE FIELD WITHOUT SUPPORT IS LIKE SENDING A FARMER TO THE FIELD WITHOUT A PLOW. God can only bless what we are willing to offer.

Today, on my desk is that same copy of "SOW." Why I've kept it all these years must be in the mind of God. It's been with me through four pastoral changes, through the fire of MCC Los Angeles on Union Street. It has encouraged me when I thought my peers misunderstood. It has strengthened me when I wanted to stop and gave me determination to give my all to the extension of a church who wanted me when no one else did. It is a church which provided tomorrows for thousands, a church where there need not be a yesterday. That church is THE UNIVERSAL FELLOWSHIP OF METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCHES.

Let's say goodbye to yesterday's experience of scratching the hard earth with bruised and bleeding hands. God has given our Fellowship some of the finest workers in the whole of Christendom, ready and willing to plant, push and pull. Join us in the effort. Support World Church Extension. Give us the plow!

"For there is no difference between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call on Christ. For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on a Christ in whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a messenger? And how shall the message be given, except someone be sent?" (Romans 10: 12-15)

And how can we send them without your support?

(If you missed the opportunity to contribute to World Church Extension on World Church Extension Sunday in your local church in February, you can make a contribution today through your pastor, or you can send it directly to Rev. Elder James Sandmire, World Church Extension, Box 36277, Los Angeles, California 90036.) ■

It has been my great fortune to lead literally hundreds of people of all ages to Christ. Never in my life have I been happier. I presume God has a work for me to do someday for which He is preparing me. My problem lies in the area of reconciling my gay lifestlye with my Christianity. I know beyond any doubt that I am saved and that eternal life is assured me. I have turned this problem of reconciling my gay and my Christian lifestyles over to the Lord for resolution, and His first answer seems to be you.

Name Withheld
Mexico

Thank you very much for answering my letter. I have always been very religious. I am Catholic, but have fellowshipped with the Seventh Day Adventists and Pentecostal Churches here. Right now, seemingly, I am nowhere. I would like to know more about MCC and receive correspondence.

George Lee
88 St. Vincent Street
Port of Spain
Trinidad, West Indies

I am gay, 31, a registered X-Ray technician. I have been seeing a psychiatrist and have developed a sort of split personality about being gay. I have been reading about you and Rev. Perry in the Advocate. Is there any kind of device you can give me so that you can keep me from going totally sour? I do not want to end up in a mental institution. I'm confused, troubled, and scared. I need help from some loving person. Waiting for a reply.

Billy Sheperd
New Victoria, Cape
Britton
Nova Scotia, Canada,
BOAIRO

Letters from Around the World

The gay religious groups here have been dissolved. Everybody is running afraid. My brother with whom you have corresponded for three years has fled to Europe. Political conditions prevent us from continuing the struggle for our rights. It hurts my pride to say it, but please do not put anything on the outside of the envelope which would identify MCC, as the church is known by many here, including our opponents. My dear Lee, pray for us.

A brother in Buenos Aires

(Most of the following letters were received by the Rev. Lee J. Carlton, Coordinator of Church Extension. Some of them are very long, sad, letters which regretfully we cannot print in full.)

All my life I wanted to serve God, but in all the churches I've joined, homosexuality is taboo. The latest has been the (Mormons). There is warmth and sincerity in the church, but they always remind us that homosexuals are sinful and shameful before the eyes of God. What can I do? I know that I am what I am. I was born this way. I am strongly attracted to my own sex, physically and spiritually. In spite of these problems, I continue to love God. I worship Him anyway. After reading Rev. Perry's book, The Lord Is My Shepherd and He Knows I'm Gay, I keep telling my friends that God cares for all of us. I am writing this letter because I have been waiting for the church to be established here in my country, and I want so desperately to be part of it. I want to serve Christ. Please tell me how soon MCC will come to the Phillipines.

Rico Bellow Omadap
3073 Apple Street
United Paranaque 3
Paranaque, Rizal
Philippines

Thank you very much for the magazine, IN UNITY, which you sent me. It soothes my mind and helps me disregard the feelings of guilt. The contents of the magazine are like a medicine to me. It relieves the pain in my heart as I reread it. Please send other copies. I am lonely and I would like to receive correspondence from MCC members. I promise to answer letters I receive. I am a graduate of Bachelor of Science and Commerce. I am 22 years old.

Roselito V. Malinao
San Jose Ormack City
Philippines 1-237

I'm writing to you today to kindly ask you to forward me information. I'm a minister in Canada and someday there will be something here that the lonely minorities will be able to go to also. I've been in your church in Seattle and the fellowship is excellent.

Rev. Ronald M. Lindsay
6-962 Cardero Street
Vancouver 5, British
Columbia, Canada

We have been very happy to read your very nice letter. MCC is something tremendous for me and I think it is a great hope for the whole church of Jesus on this earth. Since the time I was a child I could not understand why the Christians on one side brought life to the world, and on the other side they brought death. We remember the two short days you spent in Paris with us. May God give you hope and strength for your labour in Australia.

Andre and Lee
Strasbourg, France

Is this not a miracle? Imagine: Your homosexual self is a part of you, – the you God loves. You are free to be his most faithful son or daughter within your very own [illegible] identity. He does not ask us to give up our sexual [illegible] God loves us within the amazingly wide variety [illegible] our life can add to that variety and to [illegible]

Christians [illegible] Montefiore, – that Jesus [illegible], August 7, 1967, [illegible] knows what it is [illegible] a High Priest, [illegible] his mediation [illegible] ed what we [illegible] proach him [illegible] eb. 4:15).

[illegible] of a "differ- [illegible] o regard [illegible] pleship, such [illegible] omosexual-

AN EVANGELICAL LOOK AT HOMOSEXUALITY
DR. RALPH BLAIR

I'm enclosing $1.00 for each of the copies of *An Evangelical Look at Homosexuality* in my order. Please send ——— copies.

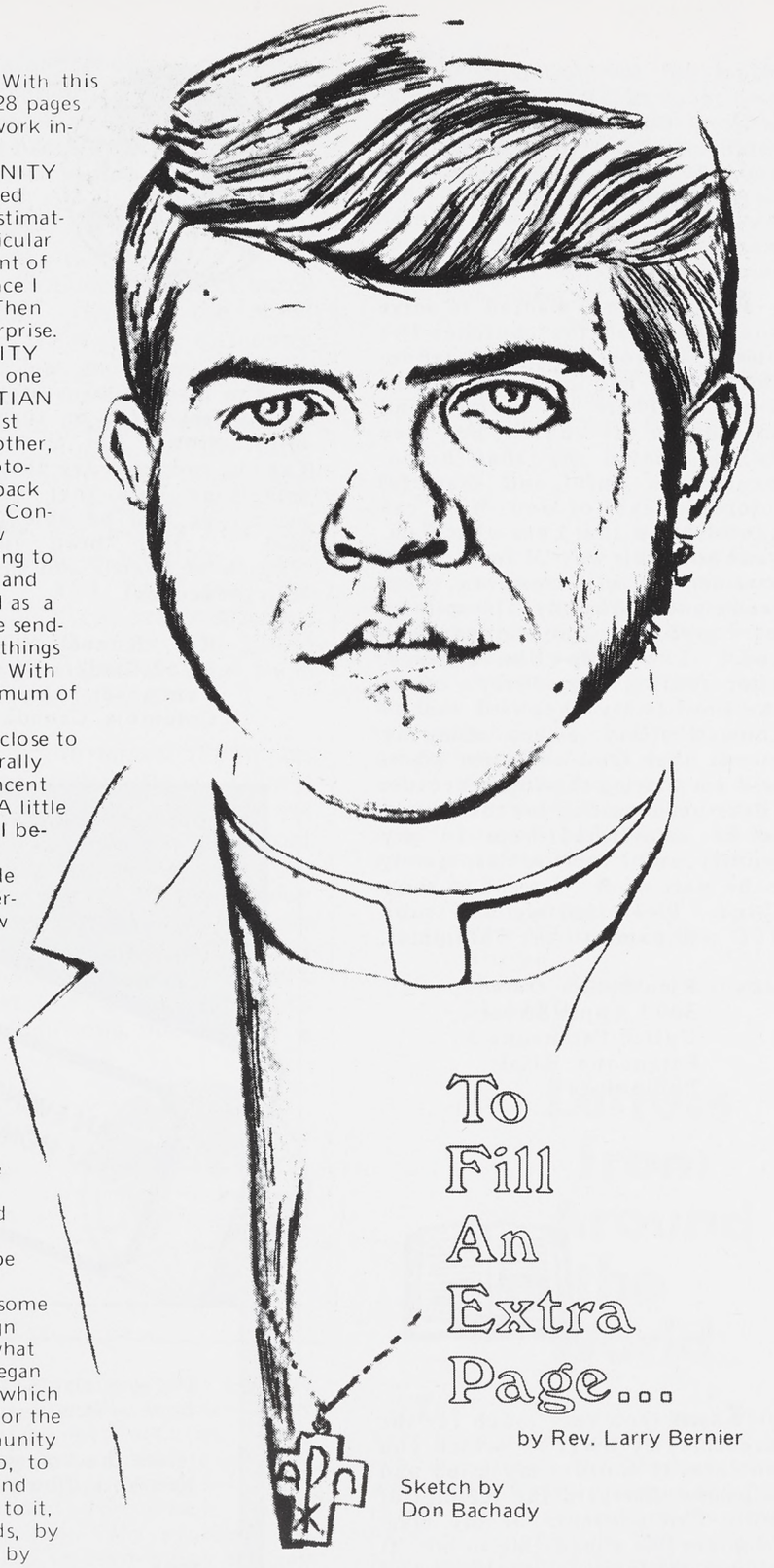
(Make checks payable to HCCC, Inc., 30 East 60th Street, New York, New York 10022)

Name_____
Address_____
City_____
State_____ Zip Code_____

Such Christia[illegible] only in the power of the Holy Spiri[illegible] watch that they do not commit the Pharis[illegible] sin" (Matt. 12:31f) by ascribing that mira[illegible] gift of self-acceptance to Satan's power.

To Fill An Extra Page...

by Rev. Larry Bernier



Sketch by
Don Bachady

Sometimes the strangest things happen! With this issue of IN UNITY we have expanded from 28 pages to 56, and thereby more than doubled the work involved in preparing the journal for print.

I've been doing the layout work on IN UNITY since the December issue, and I had convinced myself that I was becoming pretty good at estimating the number of pages necessary for a particular issue by considering such things as the amount of "copy," art work, and the general appearance I wanted to achieve in the finished product. Then I began to work on this issue, and I got a surprise.

It was evident from the start that IN UNITY would be more than 28 pages this time. For one thing, we were including THE GAY CHRISTIAN as the opinion and theology insert for the first time, and it was 12 pages in length. For another, we had plenty of material and excellent photographs which Rev. Elder Perry had brought back from his visit to Sydney for the first District Conference of the churches in Australia and New Zealand. And also, IN UNITY is really starting to become known throughout the Fellowship, and many of our pastors who realize its potential as a public relations/outreach/evangelism tool are sending us stories and articles about the exciting things happening in their churches for publication. With Rev. Mickley's approval, I estimated a maximum of 48 pages for this issue of IN UNITY.

Then the work began. We were running close to printing deadline and articles were being literally rushed from Rev. Mickley's desk to Rev. Vincent for typesetting and then to me for lay-out. A little more than half way through the production I became aware of the fact that 48 pages simply wasn't going to allow enough room to include everything, and, after much careful consideration with Rev. Mickley, we arrived at a new estimate of 56 pages for the issue.

The work went on. I rearranged pages, redesigned art work to save space, and finally each individual page was ready to be pasted on to the final 4-page "flats" to go to the printer. It was at this time that I discovered that I had been a little too conscientious in trying to conserve space — somehow, in all the rush and confusion, I had made a mistake and I discovered that I had one whole page yet available to be filled — and nothing left to put on it!

For a while I thought about this. I could spend more time re-redesigning some of the pages to spread things out a bit, or I could be radical and leave the page blank hoping the readers would think this was deliberate and some new angle in the field of contemporary design for magazines. Then I decided I would do what I had been promising myself I'd do since I began to work for IN UNITY: I'd write an article which would stress the importance of this journal for the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches and encourage you, our readership, to help us make IN UNITY everything it can,(and doubtless will) be,by reading it, subscribing to it, contributing to its everpresent financial needs, by sharing it with your family and friends, and by writing to us and sharing with us your thoughts, ideas and opinions about IN UNITY. You're reading that article.

IN UNITY has come a long way since its inception in April of 1970. It was a publication of the Los Angeles church then, with a small local circulation and a big vision of serving as the magazine of outreach for the whole of Metropolitan Community Church — at that time only 10 congregations strong. Today, MCC has grown into a great Universal Fellowship, and IN UNITY has also grown. The big vision is being realized.

The sketch of Rev. Perry and the IN UNITY logo shown here are reproductions from the cover of that first issue of IN UNITY — I found a copy while searching for something to use to fill a blank page in this present issue. Sometimes the strangest things happen.

IN UNITY

Eastern Minister's Conference: Sexual Attitude Reassessment Program

by Valerie Anne Bouchard

The Board of Elders arranged for The Akron Forum to conduct an intensive two day learning experience in human sexuality for MCC ministers, their spouses, worship coordinators, and selected deacons and exhorters, in conjunction with the annual Minister's Conferences of 1976.

The Eastern Minister's Conference was held in Akron, OH, in January. The Western Minister's Conference will be held March 19-20 at Estes Park, CO.

The format of the Sexual Attitude Reassessment (SAR) program includes lectures, viewing sexually explicit films, and small group discussion. The goals of the program are: to expose participants to the range of human sexual behavior, to help participants attain awareness of personal attitudes and feelings associated with various sexual topics, to serve as a background for dealing with sexual issues in an educational or clinical setting.

Director of the program was Dr. Richard L. Bennett, MD, who is a member of MCC Akron, along with his lover, Thomas Gertz, Administrative Director of the SAR program. The Akron Forum for the Study of Human Sexuality offers professional. educational, consultant services in human sexuality. Other team members were Toni Ayers, David Gellatly, Karen McDonald, Jane Pearl, Paul Schwitzgebel, and Wayne Thrash.

There were 47 participants: 35 male and 12 female. All District Coordinators and Elders had been in Akron for meetings, but not all attended the SAR program in Akron, some preferring to wait until March in Estes Park.

The following is one person's response to the weekend.

The SAR program could best be described for me as liberating. It was a time to learn. It was a time to share. It was a time to claim full possession of that body that God gave me in the fullness and wisdom of creation. A body that was created for its complete care and use if I am to take creation seriously. The feelings that were generated for me were feelings of openness, pleasant vulnerability, enjoyment, and a general feeling good about expressing myself as a sexual being.

I am sure that each individual who attended the Forum had a variety of mixed emotions over the course of the weekend. Some were able to converse about those emotions and learnings and others were not. Some will pass the weekend off as not too useful. Others will be pondering learnings and insights for months to come. Some may even induce their congregations to venture toward Akron for what could be mildly termed, "a different sort of weekend."

However, Akron was more than the participation of single individuals in a weekend seminar. Akron was the ability to get to know people in a very personal and a very rewarding way. Akron proved to most of us ministers that we could break down the barriers that prevent us from communicating with each other and learn to trust and talk about our innermost feelings, cares, and desires. It was the ability to talk about, think about and ask about ourselves and others.

Above all, Akron was a binding experience. It was a time to share our humanity and our faith with each other, for God was not absent from our midst. God was present. God drew us together in our spirit of love for each other.

Akron helped us to be better human beings, and it gave us the information we will need to respond to others in a more human way. We were armed with the weapons of understanding, compassion and love for all people under every circumstance.

We went to Akron to learn about the meaning of our sexuality and our ways of loving physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I left Akron uplifted, more positive, and more bound to my friends. That experience cannot help but make me a better person and a better minister.

"For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." *(1 Corinthians 13:12,13)*

My thanks to the Board of Elders in their choice and arrangements for the conference, and the Akron Forum for their generosity and expert guidance. ■

(Ms. Bouchard, an Exhorter in the MCC Chicago congregation, is an honor student at McCormack Seminary in Chicago.)

Lenten Program Spreads

Nearly thirty congregations have received materials for conducting Lenten Living Room prayer and study groups.

Rev. James Glyer, minister of Christian Growth at MCC Los Angeles, who holds a Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary, told IN UNITY he was somewhat surprised and very pleased with the overwhelming response to his offer to share the Lenten program with interested churches.

Rev. Glyer, a Presbyterian pastor for 25 years, made available to all MCC church groups the six-week program of prayer and study and sharing that was so meaningful for more than 200 people in 16 small groups in Los Angeles last Lent.

His program provides meeting outlines and study guides for each small group to use in their living room meetings for each week of Lent, culminating with an Agape dinner in Holy Week and Holy Communion.

In Los Angeles, 42 discussion leaders have been training for the last several weeks for a new series which will be used this year in the Los Angeles congregation. Based on reaction to last year's Lenten program, Rev. Glyer and the leaders are expecting a "waiting list" situation again this year.

The January IN UNITY carried the story of the Lenten Living Room Program.

Rev. Glyer said if there is sufficient response from participating congregations, a request will be made of the Board of Elders to set up a workshop in Washington D.C. at General Conference. At such a workshop, two goals could be achieved. Participating congregations could share their experience and insights in using the program. Non-participating congregations could determine if it's a program they might want to use in Lent 1977.

Rev. Jim Glyer

Planning to "Lobby"?

Delegates, members, and ministers who will be in Washington, D.C. for General Conference are urged to make appointments now to "see your Congressperson."

Wednesday, August 11, 1976, from noon until 3:00 p.m. has been reserved on the Conference schedule for "lobbying." The important thing is to make an appointment to see your Senators and Representatives. Wednesday, from noon til three would be time when such a visit would not conflict with other Conference business.

Any person who needs or wants guidance in making appointments with their Congressperson can consult Rev. Roy Birchard, Director of the Universal Fellowship Washington Office, 110 Maryland Avenue N.E., Washington, D.C. 20002.

Preparations for Conference

MCC Washington, D.C. is hosting the 1976 MCC General Conference, August 10-15 this year.

Adam DeBaugh and Michelle Rickard have been appointed co-coordinators of the local preparations for the conference.

Rev. Roy Birchard, Director of the UFMCC Washington Office and Editor of GAYS ON THE HILL, is the liaison between the Board of Elders and the local church as the preparations continue for the General Conference and Affirmation '76 during this bicentennial year.

The theme for the General Conference this year is taken from the Book of Leviticus, "Proclaim Liberation Throughout the Land."

The co-coordinators issued this statement, "This conference is a major highpoint in MCC D.C.'s history. It is a great honor to be the host church of a General Conference. As everyone should be aware, this is not an ordinary year. This is our country's Bicentennial year. Washington, D.C. is the Bicentennial City. All eyes, national and international, will be watching the activities that will take place here. As our theme proclaims, this will be a conference emphasizing our right to liberation and equal rights."

Conference Hotel Arrangements

Michelle Rickard has sent all ministers and congregations a mailing regarding hotel accomodations.

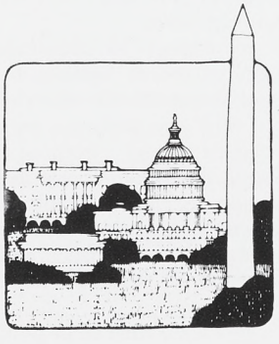
All reservations and all transactions regarding the Ambassador Hotel will be handled by Ms. Rickard. Address All correspondence on this matter to Ms. Michelle Rickard, Hotel Reservations, MCC Washington D.C., 945 G Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20001.

Tuesday and Wednesday of Conference week will consist of meetings of Boards, Commissions, Task Forces, Committees, and workshops. The business sessions will convene on Thursday.

The majority of workshops and business meetings will be held at First Congregational United Church of Christ, the host church of MCC Washington, D.C.

There is no parking space at the hotel. Parking is a crucial problem in Washington D.C. All persons planning to attend the Conference are urged not to bring automobiles into Washington.

Michelle says, "We are looking forward to your arrival in August for the Seventh Annual General Conference of the UFMCC and the love and sharing you will bring with you. See you in General Conference." ■



Pastor Scott Featured in Ventura Press

Rev. Virgil Scott, minister of MCC Ventura, some 60 miles north of Los Angeles, was featured in a story and photo in a recent edition of the Ventura County Star - Free Press.

"The 30 year old minister bases his livelihood on the $35 a week honorarium the congregation pays him," the article states. "He gets by. He lives in the church."

"Quartered in a store front, the church has 20 steady members. Twenty white folding chairs face the neat, makeshift altar. The congregation organist tries hard but misses an occasional note. But it does not matter. His tunes carry the congregation along."

After giving a biography of Virgil, and some notes on the Fellowship, the article continues, "MCC extends beyond its emphasis on sexuality. One of Scott's major concerns is the apathy he sees around him - people not caring about people."

"In that spirit," the article continues, "the church offers numberous activities. Along with the Ventura County Gay Alliance, it sponsored a Thanksgiving Dinner which 75 persons attended, many of them straight persons referred by other Ventura agencies. The best thing about it was a lot of people got to have a Thanksgiving dinner who wouldn't have had one otherwise, he said." ■

GOD WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS

MCC KANSAS CITY: NEW CHURCH HOME

In the afternoon of Monday, January 12th, our contract with the First United Pentecostal Church at 4000 Harrison St., K.C., MO., was completed. Possesion of the building will take place Wednesday, the 25th of February with the first service on the following Sunday, February 29th. The dedication service will be announced at a later date.

The Building Fund Drive ended with the amount of $15,032.91 being raised. The down payment of $12,500.00 was given with the balance being held in reserve for immediate repairs and renovations.

So many people have given so much of their time and their talents that it is impossible to mention them all. However, our special thanks for a job well done is extended to the "oil burners, ' Ron, Mary Beth, Art, Lisa, Jim, Dale, Charles, and Eric, our pastor and board. These were truly the people who pressed on with relentless determination, sleepless nights, and endless meetings to overcome each obstacle and secure our goal. God bless each one! Also to the Diaconate, Building Committee, Social Committee, Benefit Chairpersons, Poster Designers, Envelope Stuffers, Letter Writers, and everyone else who helped in some way. But, most of all, to each contributor, be they church member, friend of MCC, regular attender or non-attender, in state or out of state, PRAISE GOD for your faith in His church and for the future outreach of MCCKC.

In the beginning, God provided us with a tree in Voelker Park to gather together for worship. Now he has added a building to go along with the tree. He said, "Ask, and you shall receive." Let us now use this facility with all our strength and energy to spread the Good News and to glorify His name. "Allelujah, Lord, we praise Thee, Lord, we thank Thee, Allelujah!"

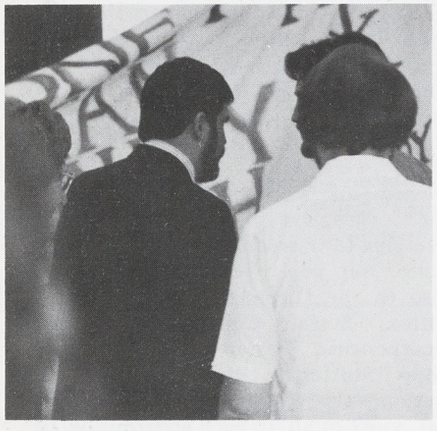
In the words of Eric Randolph, "The following is what it means to have a church building: Well, MCCKC now has its own building. So what? The important thing is not that we have a building, but rather what we do with it, how we utilize this facility that God hath provided. A church building is, in itself, a useless thing. God does not live in a church building. A church is the people who come to that building to sing songs of priase to the Lord, to pray to the Lord, and to worship and exalt Him. It is then that God lives, not in the building, but in the hearts of those persons." ■

(From The Kansas City Christian, MCC Kansas City, January 1976)

JESUS SAID ===

Continued from page 12

transportation. I am sure the Lord will supply my every need, and I look to him completely. It's really only now, in the beginning, that finances are needed, because later I feel sure the people themselves will rally to my support. I am submitting this to you for prayer. I am sure, if they can, the MCC's in the States will give, even a token, to enable me to give my full time to the ministry. I have been offered a job already, but do feel the imperative of giving my all so the work will in no way lack.



"It is thrilling to be walking in His WILL and I know it is HIS TIME FOR SOUTH AFRICA which makes it all the more interesting and exciting. I feel so confident He will give me all the wisdom I need to deal with every situation and His Spirit is the power from which I will draw ail my resources..."

It is my hope that many of you will send some contributions to help the work in South Africa. Please send your gift to the Fellowship Headquarters marked, "for South Africa" and the Board of Elders will see that all monies are transmitted to this new field of work. Once the Fellowship is registered in South Africa, we will gladly share with the world our existence in that country.

I believe that we live in the last days and that we must "work while it is yet day, for the night cometh when no person can work."

I want to thank all the congregations who received their St. Valentine's Day love offering for world evangelism.

I know that together we can make dreams come true. Together we can help change this world. Together we have learned that we need not be afraid, but together we can truly love. ■

The Vatican Speaks...

In a 21-page, 6,000-word "Declaration on Certain Questions Concerning Sexual Ethics," the Vatican's Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith, with the approval of Pope Paul VI, said:

(On homosexuality) "No pastoral method can be employed which would give moral justification to these acts ... Homosexual relations are acts which lack an essential and indispensable finality." The statement called such acts "serious depravity" and "the sad consequence of rejecting God." They are "intrinsically disordered and can in no case be approved of." However, the declaration does state that "in the pastoral field, these homosexuals must certainly be treated with understanding and sustained in the hope of overcoming their personal difficulties and their inability to fit into society. Their culpability will be judged with prudence."

(On masterbation) "The traditional Catholic doctrine that masturbation constitutes a grave moral disorder is often called into doubt today.

"It is said that psychology and sociology show that it is a normal phenomenon of sexual development.

"This opinion is contradictory to the teaching and pastoral practice of the Catholic Church." Masturbation is "an intrinsically and seriously disordered act."

(On extra-marital sex) "... the deliberate use of the sexual faculty outside normal conjugal relations essentially contradicts the finality of the faculty. For it lacks the secual relationship which realizes the full sense of mutual self-giving and human procreation in the context of true love." Conjugal love "absolutely should be able to develop into paternal and maternal love."

(On sex education) Parents and teachers who educate the young should give children "information suited to their age." The mass media "must show tact, discretion, moderation and a true sense of values" or they will only help "the growing permissiveness of behavior." ■

And Dignity Responds

The most recent statement on sexual ethics from the Vatican continues to reflect the lack of appreciation for the broad range of human sexual expression among those who follow Christ and live responsible love.

DIGNITY has been challenging the Catholic Church to a more sensitive pastoral care of the homosexual community, flowing from a more enlightened understanding of contemporary psychological, scriptural, and theological data on homosexuality.

The present Vatican document, while urging a "sensitive pastoral approach to the homosexual," does little more than repeat the traditional, unenlightened condemnation of homosexual expression, based on the presupposition that human sexuality is God-given and moral only in heterosexual marriage for the purpose of procreation. Such a narrow understanding of human sexuality has been seriously challenged by a large number of American Catholic theologians who recognize the broader purpose of human sexuality as an expression of unselfish love between two people, as a responsible communication of their love and shared life.

To speak of homosexuality as "intrinsically disordered" is to neglect current biological and psychological data on homosexuality and the life experience of gay people themselves who find their sexual orientation not a disordered curse, but a God-given gift, not a freely chosen rejection of God, but the very context for their living the Gospel of responsible love.

DIGNITY continues to maintain that, in the light of recent findings by both Church and scientific scholars and in the light of the gay person's own experience, constitutional homosexuality is a *natural, irreversible variation of sexual behavior*, ... that it is intrinsically good when it is expressed in an ethically responsible, unselfish, and Christian manner, as all sexuality must be.

Please turn to page 55

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS ON JAMES H. CONE'S BLACK THEOLOGY FROM A GAY PERSPECTIVE

by HOWARD R. WELLS

MY INITIAL exposure to Black Theology occurred while I was in route, by car, from New York to Miami to attend the 1972 National Democratic Convention. Being deeply involved in the gay religious movement, I had suspected that black people's struggle for personhood had something essential to say to gay people as the latter started on that long road. So, prior to the trip, I picked up some reading material on Black Power, including James H. Cone's *Black Theology and Black Power* and *A Black Theology of Liberation.* By the time I had reached Miami, I had practically devoured Cone's books and hardly touched the others. His theological approach to oppression affected me profoundly. It made explicit my own emerging feelings and thoughts regarding the nature of oppression; it clearly defined the place of the Christian gospel in the act of human liberation; it gave me, for the first time, an exciting sense of comradeship with other oppressed people, and it offered me very helpful insights into the dynamics of social struggle.

I agree completely with Cone's basic thesis that *Christianity can legitimately be the faith of only the oppressed.* The divine liberating act reflected in the Christ Event is a legacy that belongs exclusively to those who suffer the bonds of enslavement. At best, the oppressor can hear divine judgment against his sinfulness and the call to repentence by utterly rejecting his own *bona fides* and affirming, unconditionally, the humanity and "right to be" of the oppressed. For Cone, that means that "...white people must be prepared to deny themselves (whiteness), take up the cross (blackness) and follow Christ (black ghetto)...To be black means that your heart, your soul, your mind and your body are where the dispossessed are."[1] God's liberating power has broken into human history through the Christ Event; the decisive victory over those principalities and powers that oppress human beings has been won, and it is only a matter of time before those who hold tight the chains of enslavement realize that they have already lost the battle and must let go.

Because salvation through the Christ Event belongs exclusively to the oppressed, the oppressor is in no position to say anything intelligent or accurate about the Christian faith, or specifically, about Black Theology, for the latter is essentially a response through thought and action by the liberated community of faith to the question, "What does the gospel of Jesus Christ have to say to black people who are struggling to survive in a white racist society that denies their claim to personhood?"

I find it interesting that I initially responded to Black Theology not so much as a judgment against my white skin but as a proclamation of my "right to be" as a gay person. In numerous places in Cone's books, I mentally struck out the word "black" and replaced it with the word "gay" and I heard the same message — God did not create human beings in order to be enslaved by their fellows, regardless whether they are black or gay. Perhaps more importantly, this juxposition of words enabled me to recognize important bonds of commonality between gays and blacks that I had never imagined.

In view of my complete agreement with Cone's basic theological perspective, I was confronted with a paradox — I found myself being an oppressor and one who is oppressed, not just by straights, but ironically by straights, some who are also black! I wondered whether I could legitimately reflect on or criticize Black Theology since I have white skin and therefore am an inheritor of an oppressor's tradition. That dilemma led me to consider how I define myself, i.e., who I am. I finally concluded that I regard myself, first and foremost, as a gay person. My value system and perception of reality arise out of that aspect of my being. In fact, I affirm my identity and "right to be" by affirming my gayness. Even Cone notes that in an oppressor-oppressed situation, the only way that the latter can maintain a sense of integrity and authentic identity is to "affirm the very characteristic which the oppressor ridicules,"[2] which for Cone is blackness.

The essence of theology is Jesus Christ. The sources of theology, i.e., the "stuff" out of which that essence is created in the lives of human beings is very often "the very stone which was rejected by the builder but which has become the head of the corner."[3] For blacks, the stone that was rejected by the world is the color of their skin, but it is through their blackness that they find Jesus Christ and consequently their human identity. Likewise,

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my gayness was the "stuff" out of which Jesus Christ was created in my life, and like blacks, it is that divine workmanship in my life by which I define who I am.

Therefore, because I am oppressed on the basis of an essential element of my humanity, and because one of the sources of Black Theology is the black experience which has elements of homophobia in it, I can legitimately embrace Black Theology as speaking to my experience of oppression on one hand, and on the other, criticize Black Theology where I recognize oppressive elements in it that deny my "right to be" as a gay person.

But I must always question the real motivation of my criticisms of Black Theology. Am I speaking as a *white oppressor* to blacks or as a *gay person* to blacks — who are simultaneously comrades — in oppression and my oppressors?

The reality of human beings simultaneously being oppressors and oppressed is not taken into consideration in Cone's theology. I regard this omission as a critical shortcoming. I hope to show how this omission has seriously compromised the integrity of his theological perspective:

(1) It leads to an inadequate eschatology in Cone's theology;
(2) It establishes an inflated identification with God's liberating act in Jesus Christ;
(3) It excludes black people from divine judgment, thereby denying them their humanity,
(4) It denies divine reconciliation and reconciliation among human beings an adequate place in Black Theology;
(5) It leads to a false sense of liberation and instead represents or calls for merely a redistribution of the existing power structure without radically changing or transforming its oppressive nature, and
(6) It rightfully exposes Cone's theology to the charge that it advocates a religion of blackness rather than a legitimate focusing of the Gospel on the black experience.

In preparation for consideration of the above charges, it is beneficial to review Cone's thoughts on eschatology, reconciliation and divine judgment and righteousness.

Black Eschatology

Cone regards an eschatology that is faithful to the Christ Event to be one in which the promise of God's liberation of the oppressed is brought to fruition. The oppressed participate in God's work to bring His kingdom to full realization by comparing the absurdity of the present — enslavement of the weak and poor — to the promise of the future — liberation from oppression, and on the basis of that inconsistency say "No!" to the tyranny of the world's principalities and powers. Cone notes that "...no eschatological perspective is sufficient which does not challenge the present order. If contemplation about the future distorts the present reality of injustice and reconciles the oppressed to unjust treatment committed against them, then it is unchristian and thus has nothing whatever to do with him who came to liberate us (blacks)."[4] Thus the eschatological emphasis of Black Theology affirms that the oppressed cannot reconcile themselves to the tyranny of the present, e.g., racism, that contradicts the promise of the Christ Event. Cone states that "...this is the key to Black Theology. It refuses to embrace any concept of God which makes black suffering the will of God...with a black perspective, eschatology comes to mean joining the world and making it what it ought to be."[5] Black eschatology also means affirmation of life for the oppressed after death, i.e., to affirm that those who die striving for freedom have not died in vain.

EVERY HUMAN BEING IS MARKED WITH THE SIN STAIN OF BEING AN OPPRESSOR. THERE EXISTS NO OPPRESSED PEOPLE WHO ARE NOT OPPRESSORS ALSO.

Divine Judgment and Righteousness in Black Theology

Cone notes that God's judgment is the unveiling of His righteousness in history, where the righteousness of God is His power to achieve victory for the oppressed; God reveals Himself by what He does in history, and according to Cone, "...what He does is always identical with the liberation of the poor from the injustice of the strong."[7] Thus heaven in Black Theology is an expression of black hope in the power of God's righteousness as it has been promised to be revealed in the future. Divine judgment is necessarily related to eschatology since "Christ himself will come to judge both the living and the dead, and all men will stand before his judgment seat."[8] Black Theology emphasizes that the oppressed have no reason to fear divine judgment as they are the sole inheritors of the salvation won on the Cross.

Reconciliation in Black Theology

Cone speaks of black-white reconciliation at any significant length only in *Black Theology and Black Power* and he is very pessimistic about its immediate possibility. He correctly notes that when whites speak of reconciliation, they are usually assuming that they will dictate the terms of that "new" relationship. Cone dismisses such assumptions as presumptuous and highly oppressive. Black people are not free if that means permission to buy into the white power structure, e.g., integration into white-ruled racist America. Reconciliation is a possibility only "...when white people are prepared to address black men as *black* men and not as some grease-painted form of white humanity. Black Theology will not respond positively to whites who insist on making blacks as white as possible by de-emphasizing their blackness and stressing the irrelevance of color while really living as racists. As long as whites live like *white* people (through marriage, schools, neighborhoods, power, etc.) black people must use blackness as the sole criterion for dialogue. Otherwise reconciliation will mean

black people living according to white rules and glorifying white values, being orderly and calm while others enact laws which will destroy them."[9] Biblical reconciliation means that due to the Christ Event, black people can now be what they were meant to be — creatures made for fellowship with God. And divine reconciliation between God and humankind can be reflected in black-white reconciliation only when whites renounce their whiteness and seek to identify themselves completely with "...those whom God has chosen. God has chosen black people."[10]

Now, I agree with Cone's contention that only the oppressed are the inheritors of the Christian promise of salvation, but who are these wholly "Oppressed Ones"? *Every human being is marked with the sin stain of being an oppressor*, because we all carry the onus of original sin; this sin stain in the black community is manifested, among other ways, in the form of gay oppression. There exists no oppressed person or people who are not oppressors also.

One will search Cone's theology in vain for his response to the problem of blacks simultaneously being oppressed and oppressors. Instead, he directs God's judgment solely against "whiteness." In doing so, Cone is effecting a great disservice to black people; he is in effect denying that they are human beings, for only animals and God stand outside of divine judgment, and he leads blacks into an unrealistic, inflated identification with God's liberating act in Jesus Christ.

By excluding black people from the possibility of being oppressors and thus exempt from divine judgment, Cone risks falling prey to his own statement that "...only oppressors can turn in upon themselves and worship their own projected image and define it as God."[11]

The basic crime of racism is that it has denied black people the right to speak their word — their truth — a truth that is surely more aligned with the spirit of the Christian gospel than can be heard in the utterances from white pulpits. But the black truth is not the Final Truth, i.e., the Word proclaimed in the Christ Event, because the black word emerges from the hearts and souls of black human beings who are not only promised liberation, but who are also subject to divine judgment for their oppression of others, e.g., gay people. Simply stated, black people are complete, full human beings, and therefore they are subject to sin and error just like other human beings. So when black artist Larry Neal asks, "What is truth? Or more precisely, whose truth shall we express, that of the oppressed or of the oppressors?",[12] the black Christian must in honesty reply, "The only truth I can express is the black truth, and to the extent that the black truth is the truth of the oppressed, it is God's Truth — the Final Truth."

CONE IS ELIMINATING THE MOST IMPORTANT ELEMENT OF SALVATION HISTORY — RECONCILIATION, AND THEREFORE HE IS COURTING A FALSE SENSE OF LIBERATION THAT IS NOTHING MORE THAN ... A SHIFTING OF THE PECKING ORDER OF OPPRESSION.

Cone asserts that in order to escape the bonds of white racist oppression, it is necessary for black people to carve out new values that are independent of white "Christian" values.[13] This assertion is certainly in line with the biblical admonition to "Envy thou not the oppressor and choose none of his ways."[14] But the carving out of new values is to run the risk of establishing black "Christian" values in their place which will also be oppressive since such values will necessarily arise out of the black experience which is tainted with homophobic elements. In order to avoid substituting one oppressive value system for another, it is essential that Black Theology avoid the critical error of white values by including in itself God's right to say "No" to black values, i.e., bring black people under divine judgment. If this is not done, the black value system — no matter how noble or righteous its origins might be — will become demonic. As Paul Tillich correctly pointed out, when the finite claims to be infinite, i.e., stands outside of the possibility of coming under divine judgment, then it constitutes a form of idolatry and inevitably results in "existential disappointment."[15]

Cone's failure to include in his theology a place for divine judgment directed toward black people is also reflected in his inadequate eschatology. He is eloquent in his description of what black people are to be liberated *from*, but he fails to explore what they are to be liberated *for*.

One needs to review salvation history in order to appreciate its affirmative nature. Yahweh did not just liberate the children of Israel *from* Egyptian bondage because He felt sorry for them; rather, He liberated them *for* the purpose of being a light to all the nations, i.e., Israel's chosenness was to be the servant of God's wide-ranging historical purpose of redemption and reconciliation.

Salvation for a greater purpose than just relief from bondage was made even more explicit in the Christ Event; namely, we in the community of faith are saved from the tyranny of sin in order that we might proclaim God's reconciling and redeeming love to "...all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I (Jesus Christ) have commanded you..."[16] Thus, divine liberation is always for a purpose, and the central theme in all manifestations of salvation history is that those who are liberated are called to serve as agents of reconciliation between God and humankind. Nowhere in Scripture is this more clearly stated than in Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians: "All this (salvation) is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting

their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."[17]

In simply calling for liberation from oppression, Cone is eliminating the most important element from salvation history — reconciliation, and therefore he is courting a false sense of liberation that is nothing more than a redistribution of the existing power structure, a redistribution that does not essentially change or transform the oppressive nature of that structure. The only thing that is new is a shifting of the pecking order of oppression.

Despite Cone's assertion that "...Black Theology takes seriously God's reconciling act in Jesus Christ...among other things, this means that the wall of hostility is broken down between blacks and whites, making color irrelevant to man's essential nature...," one understandably wonders if Cone is serious. Indeed, one must ask of Cone, "On whose terms is reconciliation to be effected?" As long as he shuns the reality of blacks being subject to sin and error and thus coming under divine judgment, Cone must answer, "On black terms," since, as noted above, "God has chosen black people!"[18] In fact, Cone makes quite explicit blacks' exclusive claim on God's liberating power: "We (blacks) will not accept a God who is on everybody's side — which means that he loves everybody in spite of who they are, and is working (through the acceptable channels of society, of course) to reconcile all people to himself."[19]

So the question remains — what are black people being liberated for? We can only be sure that whatever the reason for their being a part of salvation history, its final goal is reconciliation — reconciliation on God's terms and God's alone.

Cone is correct in affirming that black people have every right to kill "the white thing" by any means necessary. There is no redeeming quality in white racism, and since white people have proven themselves unwilling and unable to eradicate racism from their value perspectives, black people must do it for them, even if it means engaging in physical violence. As patients do not prescribe the method of treatment to their physicians, whites are in no position to set the terms of black eradication of white racism. If whites want to participate in this purging process, Cone demands that they "...keep silent and take instructions from black people."[20] But where does divine judgment of black people enter into this scene? As blacks put a gun against the head of the white oppressor, knowing that they are indeed justified in pulling the trigger, they should notice the gun righteously aimed at their own heads by gay people. And so on down the line until at the end, one finds a divine gun aimed at all mankind. But one also finds a God whose hand of wrath is stayed because *He does love all people.*

How then are we who call ourselves Christian to live out this new relationship with God in an oppressor-oppressed environment? Are we to refrain from efforts to free ourselves from our oppressors for fear that what we do to our oppressors will be done to us by those who we oppress? Quite the contrary, the Christian gospel demands that we be even more aggressive in facing our oppressors head on and declare, "I'm not going to take any more of your shit!," knowing that in doing so, we are forcing our oppressor to relate to us as a "Thou" rather than an "It" and thereby participating in the effort to bring about the full realization of the kingdom of God.

But in the course of affirming our humanity by confronting our oppressors, we must simultaneously recognize that we are under conviction for our own role as oppressors.

James Cone's Black Theology is important because it correctly emphasizes the need for a well-defined diachotomy to exist before meaningful reconciliation can take place; each polarity has a right to stand on its own integrity, e.g., black people are not white people with black skins, and gay people are not straight people who go to bed with people of their own sex: "If integration means that each man meets the other on equal footing, with neither possessing the ability to assert the rightness of his style over the other, then mutual meaningful dialogue is possible."[22] Cone also notes that divine reconciliation is not merely a compromise of two warring polarities but something completely new: "Men were not created for separation, and color is not the essence of man's humanity."[23] Perhaps this is as close as Cone wants to move toward the notion of divine judgment of black people, the black experience and black values. Yet the need still exists for Black Theology to overcome the tempting lure of inflated identification with diety. If it cannot do that in the context of black-white reconciliation at this time, perhaps a more appropriate starting place would be to constructively deal with its own homophobia.

[1]Cone, James H. *Black Theology and Black Power.* New York: The Seabury Press. 1969. pp. 150-151. Unfortunately, Cone is guilty of blurring the distinction between the literal and symbolic meaning of the word "blackness" as will be shown in this paper.

[2]BTBP' p. 18

[3]Acts 4:11, RSV

[4]Cone, James H. *A Black Theology of Liberation.* Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company. 1970. p. 240.

[5]BTBP, pp. 124-126.

[6]BTL, p. 248.

[7]Cone, James H. *The Spirituals and the Blues: An Interpretation.* New York: The Seabury Press. 1972. p. 102.

[8]Matthew 5:31, RSV

[9]BTBP, pp. 147-148.

[10]BTBP, p. 151.

[11]BTL, p. 234.

[12]BTBP, p. 132.

[13]BTBP, p. 127.

[14]Proverbs 3:31, KJV

[15]Tillich, Paul. *Dynamics of Faith.* New York: Harper Torchbooks. 1957. pp. 11-12.

[16]Matthew 28:19b-20a, RSV

[17]II Corinthians 5:18-20, RSV

[18]Note 10

[19]BTL, p. 131.

[20]BTL, p. 119.

[21]II Corinthians 5:21, RSV

[22]BTBP, p. 17.

[23]BTBP, p. 17.

Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

THE CELLMATE

March 1976

Michigan Officials Recognize Pastor Heather Anderson As Chaplain At State Prison

The Rev. Heather Anderson, MCC Chaplain of the Michigan State Prison at Jackson, has been recognized by prison and state corrections officials as a chaplain for the institution.

This major breakthrough at the world's largest walled prison was joyous news for Rev. Anderson and the 35 prisoners who call themselves her congregation. Hopefully it means an end to long waiting (as long as two hours) for visitor's passes for Heather, and an end to detention, threats, and other harrassment for the prisoners who have boldly chosen to identify themselves with MCC ministry.

Rev. Anderson, also co-pastor of MCC Detroit, has been visiting prisoners at Jackson, one to one, in the visiting room, for several months.

Rev. Anderson forwarded signed statements from 35 prisoners to prison officials. She sent xerox copies to the State Director of Corrections. She sent copies of all correspondence to the governor and interested legislators.

The next thing she heard was the the warden's office advised her they would study homosexuality, "re-searching" its causes, etc, etc. Heather was not to be put off by such delaying tactics. "Those prisoners are serious about being Christians," Heather said. "They want to know the Lord. Some have serious problems they want to talk over. They should not be denied this right."

Finally, toward the end of February, the warden's office agreed, after being contacted by the office of the state Director of Corrections, to recognize Rev. Anderson as a chaplain. This means she can go inside the walls. No more counseling in the visiting room where it is practically impossible to pray with the prisoners. She now can work inside, recognized as a professional minister.

Heather had sent the prison officials a copy of the decision of the federal court in California, stating that MCC is a bona fide church and that denial of prisoners' requests for the services of this church is a serious abridgement of their constitutional rights. The caution and careful checking of the prison officials is understandable in view of the number of spurious outfits which would pawn themselves off as churches for tax benefits and other personal gain. "It is to their credit that they recognized the seriousness and sincerity of the ministry of MCC," said Rev. Bud Bunce, National Chief of Chaplains.

For some prisoners, this has been a real test of their faith. The long-termers are impressed by the risks being taken by short termers in their behalf. One prisoner writes up a report of the discussions each week and shares it with all those who are not able to see Heather in the one to one discussions. Recently the warden's office called him in and asked him, "By what authority do you evangelize for this religion?" Without hesitation, the answer came back, "By authority of Jesus Christ."

It all started with Ken Brown. Some months ago, Ken, a prisoner at Jackson, wrote Rev. Dick Mickley, National Administrator of the Prison Ministry, telling him of the sincere interest of the Jackson prisoners and their urgent need to have MCC ministry. He immediately put them in touch with Reverends Wilson and Anderson, co-pastors of MCC Detroit, some 75 miles from Jackson.

"Ken Brown is the leader," asserts Heather, "and a beautiful person. He's dynamite. And sincere. They all want to grow as Christians."

Heather takes several members of the Detroit congregation with her to visit the prisoners. They have been undergoing an intensive training program. Heather discusses with them the material of *Handbook of Prison Ministry* as they prepare themselves for effective prison ministry.

"It now looks good to have worship services for the prisoners without going to court," Heather conjectured. If it does have to go to court, a friendly attorney has agreed to represent MCC at no cost to the church.

"Please pray for this ministry," Heather pleaded. "Please pray for those who are jeopardizing their parole and suffering harrassment so that they and others can have the full gospel, all the Good News, of Jesus."

Rev. Mickley, commented, "Of course, we are very thankful that MCC ministry is available for our brothers in Jackson. I think this goes to show that there are urgent needs all over this country. And the right person, empowered by the Holy Spirit, can get the job done. Heather was ready and willing and hard working. God is using her."

Rev. Heather Anderson strolls with Rev. Arthur Green.

Consciousness and Conscience

by Mary Lee Krueger

I had no idea what I was getting myself into by going to the Prison Ministry Workshop conference January 9-11. The conference hosted by MCC Indy, Indianapolis, of the Prison Ministry of UFMCC Great Lakes District was under the direction of Norm Flowers Area Representative for the Great Lakes District, and Bud Bunce, Chief of Chaplains.

My only previous contact with Prison Ministry was hearing about it from the pulpit during announcements.

But by Saturday night of the conference, what Prison Ministry means, hit me full force. I found myself coming to a new consciousness of what it means to be imprisoned.

There are people — real people — with names, lives, personalities, dreams in prisons across the country; some have been there 30 years and more, living in artificial situations; living in fear of their lives at times; often, kept in extra years because of a homosexual orientation. People caged in tiny cells, people who never see or hear from the outside world during their prison stay.

So it hit me and it began to eat at me, "Why should *I* be out walking around *free*, and not be involved in ministry to these people in prison. People desparate for just a little human contact. People needing someone to care about them. People deserving to be treated as humans, as other brothers and sisters, not as non-persons!"

Some are imprisoned simply because they are gay. There are people who long ago paid their debt to society and deserve a chance now to learn of their own self worth and some sort of self respect. There are people in prison needing and deserving ministry. They are an oppressed people, a people broken.

Were *we* not broken?

Did not MCC (for the first time for many of us) give us a chance to become whole? Are we not called out of ourselves to minister to these people; to share with them the very chance we had: to become whole?

I suggest you attend the Prison Ministry workshops planned here and at other MCC churches around the country. Seek to discover what you can do, either, directly involved with prisoners or on fund-raising activities.

Find out what Prison Ministry is really about. Find out what is happening to our brothers and sisters across the country who are incarcerated.

Attend workshops offered to you and raise your level of consciousness about this group of oppressed people.

But *do* find out for yourself. Because, and I repeat: No one is free until *everyone* is free. ■

(Reprinted from *The Shepherd's Staff*, Good Shepherd Parish, MCC Chicago, February 1976.)

Criminal Justice Task Force Seeks to Destroy S-1

by Dick Mickley

A major thrust of the Inter-religious Task Force on Criminal Justice is the total defeat of the 753 page rewrite of the U.S. criminal code, Senate Bill (S–1) now being considered by the Senate Juciciary Committee.

The repressive provisions of this bill would be a great set back to civil liberties and in the opinion of some experts would kill the Bill of Rights even in this bicentennial year of American freedom.

The criminal justice task force focused considerable attention on strategy to defeat the bill at its two day meeting in New York City, January 26-27. It was my privilege to represent the Board of Institutional Ministry and the Fellowship at this meeting. Rev. Joseph Gilbert, a member of the three person Board of Institutional Ministry, is a permanent member of the Task Force and will represent the Fellowship at the next meeting, April 6-7 in New York.

The task force, a sub group of the Joint Strategy and Action Committee (JSAC), is composed of national staff members and other delegates from many of the major denominations represented. These include: American Baptist, Episcopal, Roman Catholic, United Presbyterian Church, Presbyterian Church (USA), United Church of Christ, American Friends, Lutheran Church in America, Church of the Brethren, Unitarian-Universalist, as well as MCC.

A resolution was passed outlining the thrust of the Task Force's testimony before hearings of the Senate and House committees studying the bill.

The task force is joining in the effort to inform the public of the dreadful implications of the bill for American civil liberties. Spokespersons for the ACLU have commented that there is a very real possibility that this bill will be passed unless citizens of America are educated about its consequences and scream their opposition.

Its provisions are reminiscent of the Nixon and McCarthy eras and would set the stage for a virtual police state. Nixon-type government secrecy and immunity are sanctioned along with entrapment activities, longer prison sentences, prejudicial treatment of Native Americans (Indians), etc.

Readers of this magazine are urged to be leaders in the outcry against this bill.

In other action, the Task Force continued its study of strategy for the delay (moratorium) of prison construction. Testimony of Task Force members before Congress last year helped in stopping millions of dollars worth of federal prison construction. "The more prisons, the more prisoners needed to fill them." This slogan is so close to what happens and so alien to the spirit of criminal justice that the Task Force has focused much of its considerable power on the efforts for moratorium in prison construction.

The Task Force studied its strategy in the Attica and Kent State situations and heard a plea from Russell Means concerning the plight of American Indians, trying to obtain justice in courts which are "railroads to prison." He cited one jail in Rapid City, SD,

which on a typical day has 84 inmates: 82 Indians, 2 blacks, and little hope for justice.

I found it very eye-opening to be associated with national strategy makers. I was pleased that people of the caliber of these people are concerned enough about the people of America and their freedom that they would give tremendous amounts of their time, talent, and money for the furtherance of these causes.

I was glad to become better informed about these and other matters pertaining to criminal justice. I could not help but be aware that many of the people I was representing there happen to be members of a minority very often victims of the so-called criminal "justice" system in som of today's most blatant situations of harassment, persecution, unjust prosecution, and helpless deprivation of civil liberties. I made a resolution to keep better informed of matters pertaining to criminal justice and to encourage my brothers and sisters to take an interest in these matters which are so vital to the freedoms we would all like to enjoy.

I was welcomed with courtesy as an equal member of the Task Force. Many of the Task Force members spoke to me during breaks about the work and ministry of MCC. It was encouraging to receive the encouragement of these men and women, many of whom have high positions in their denominations. I thank God for the open minded, justice-minded people who have opened their meetings and hearts to MCC.

GOD NEEDS YOU

by Norm Flowers

"If you have not done it unto the least of these, my brethren, you have not done it unto me."

The Universal Fellowship has a heritage that it can well be proud of. From its very founding by Rev. Troy Perry to this very day, UFMCC has made great strides as a Christian Church, overcoming impossible obstacles on sometimes nothing more than pure blind faith.

Yet too often we are content with boasting of the past. We stand in the present applauding the past until the future becomes the present and is lost in the same way.

In any church, including MCC, it is always a certain few who do all the work while the spectators boast about it. Usually it is the same few who serve on the committees, answer the phones, assist with publications, do the witnessing, help the office staff, and in general make MCC what it is today.

Some will say to this, "But I give a lot of money to the Church." Good! Money is also of importance, but it is not enough. It also takes time. "But I just don't have time." And they have a lot of excuses to prove it.

Well I sincerely wonder how anyone who hasn't got time for God and the Lord's work can expect God to have time for them. But that is an underestimation of our God. Even though we neglect God, God never neglects us.

However, God is in need of a lot more people to get involved. For example, the Prison Ministry of MCC has a very effective program developed and not enough people to set it in motion. Across the nation a dedicated few are trying to meet the needs of thousands of prisoners who have turned to MCC, and many are lucky if they even get an answer to their letter. If you were involved in the Prison Ministry, you would be able to write a lettter to a prisoner in the same amount of time that it has taken you to read this article, and thus make life a little more bearable for someone else.

You can tell me of all your commitments, of all your financial contributions, and of how you just don't have time. But it is not to me or anyone else to whom you have to explain. Tell your God. Tell God why you can't get involved. Tell God why you can't write a prisoner. Tell God of your great works. Then let God speak to you. You may find that you can add to both your commitment and your blessings. ■

FAITH IN ACTION

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Becky Lema has recently been appointed Area Representative in the Stockton, CA area. Becky is presently corresponding with prisoners in Vacaville and Atascadaro. She has worked with inmates at the Sacramento County Jail and she expects to be working soon for the Parole Division of the California Youth Authority. ■

**

Sheldon Haight, Area Representative in the Seattle area, reports that the foundation is being laid for MCC Worship Services and gay rap groups inside the McNeil Island Federal Penitentiary. They are also involved in bringing the Prison Ministry to the gay community at Washington State Prison by a Self Awareness Program and are attempting every possible effort to extend the ministry to women prisoners. The CELLMATE has also learned that Jerry Reno has been released and living in Seattle. Jerry has a lot of MCC friends who surely are rejoicing with him. ■

**

Harlan Jacks is the new Area Representative for the Dallas area. He has worked closely with Steve Childers in the past and maintains a solid pen pal ministry to prisoners. The CELLMATE was also informed that Fr. Hoolihan and the Regional Director of the Federal Department of Corrections, Mr. Hewes, have recommended to the Legal Department that MCC be allowed into the institutions and they expect a March first decision. Rev. James Harris, Chaplain of the Segoville prison, recently met with the Texas State Chief of Chaplains to discuss MCC ministry. Steve Childers has recently moved out of state and we hope to hear more from him soon.

Norm Flowers Visits Fellowship Offices

Norm Flowers, District Representative of the Board of Prison Ministry in the Great Lakes District, spent two weeks in the Fellowship offices from February 20 to March 4.

Norm, who is a member of Good Shepherd Parish, MCC Chicago, is in California to confer with Revs. Mickley, Bunce, Vincent, Perry, and Sandmire and to learn more about the national prison ministry of this Fellowship.

During his visit, he is keeping busy in the Fellowship offices. The first job he was given was to serve as guest editor for this issue of CELLMATE.

"We are pleased," said Rev. Bunce, "to have this opportunity to get to know Norm better. I was very impressed by the work he did on the Prison Ministry Seminar in Indianapolis."

"I hate to see this two weeks come to an end," said Rev. Mickley. "Norm shows strong administrative ability and the work that has been accomplished in Chicago through his efforts speak well for this dedicated Christian worker."

NOTICE

Interest in the prison ministry is spreading and growing. The Board of Institutional Ministry is delighted to see this.

However, it is the policy of the Universal Fellowship of MCC that no person is authorized to contact any state or prison official in the name of MCC or regarding MCC prison ministry without specific authorization from the Board of Institutional Ministry.

All ministry in state and federal institutions is under the complete jurisdiction of the Board of Institutional ministry and must be authorized by that Board. All ministry in city and county jails is under the complete jurisdiction of the local MCC pastor.

Several instances have recently come to the attention of the Board regarding ministries and contacts in state and federal institutions which were not authorized by the Board. The Board wants to encourage ministry to as many prisons as possible. For the protection of the prisoners, for the authenticity of the ministry, for the sake of "good order," all ministry in the name of MCC must be launched with proper authorization. ■

THE BOARD OF INSTITUTIONAL MINISTRY
Rev. Richard R. Mickley,
National Administrator
Rev. Bud Bunce
National Chief of Chaplains
Rev. Joseph Gilbert
National Advisor

Fred Knight Describes Prison Services

Fred Knight, resident coordinator of MCC services at the California Men's Colony at San Luis Obispo, wrote that there were 80 persons in attendance at the most recent service, conducted by the Rev. Tere Roderick.

"This was our first service in our beautiful new meeting room. We had a lot of nice things going for us in this service. Inmate Patton sang a beautiful solo with Ken Mebs on the piano. Inmate McGray also gave a splendid performance with a reading about the Creation of the world.

"Rev. Tere Ann Roderick gave a beautiful sermon about God's love for all God's children. We enjoyed the service. Word is getting around now and some day I hope to see every one of 2000 prisoners here attending MCC.

"Many of us in here have no outside friends who write to us. I would like to send you names of only those who are sincerely interested in making Christian friendships. No games. It's very lonely in here, especially at mail call time."

"Our MCC committee officers are: Fred Knight, Coordinator; Vannoy Cleveland, Assistant Coordinator; Jerry Baldy, Secretary; Family Representatives are Joseph Patton, Donald Arnold, Terry Hand, Falka Garcia. The program artist is Billy DeWolf and the piano player is Jackie Hoffman.

"Everyone here has needed something to relate to for a long time. We want to thank you all for your concern for us here at the institution. We also want to thank you for including the CELLMATE in IN UNITY."

Fred's Address is: Fred Knight, B-56125; Box A-E, Room 1304; San Luis Obispo, CA 93409. ■

AREA REPRESENTATIVES

The following are Area Representatives of the Board of Institutional Ministry. They can be contacted by prisoners about any of the services offered by MCC Prison Ministry. MCC members who wish to know more about the work, or are interested in being a part of this ministry should write to the nearest Area Representative.

Rev. Heather Anderson, 13100 Woodward Ave., Highland Park, MI 48203

Rev. Bob Arthur, POB 14407, Omaha, NB 68114

Nick Cupo, POB 8174, Philadelphia, PA 19101

Arthur Fleschner, 2904 Concordia Ave., Tampa, FL 33609

Norm Flowers, POB 2392, Chicago, IL 60690

Rev. Howard Gaass, POB 1145, Baltimore, MD 21203

Rev. Joseph Gilbert, 63 Chapin Ave., Providence, RI 02909

Sheldon Haight, POB 12020, Seattle, WA 98112

Harlan Jacks, 3834 Ross Ave., Dallas, TX 75204

Steve LaFever, POB 187, Nashville, TN 37202

Ms. Becky Lema, 2606 N. Wilson Way, Stockton, CA 95205

James Lewey, POB 3147, St. Louis, MO 63130

Eddie Sue McMurtry, POB 291, Jacksonville, FL 32201

Gary Morris, POB 563, Akron, OH 44309

Terry Napier, POB 39235, Cincinnati, OH 45239

Rev. Jay Neely, POB 1757, New York, NY 10001

Bert Perkins, 11717 Victory Blvd, North Hollywood, CA 91606

Rev. Tere Roderick, 1076 Guerrero St., San Francisco, CA 94110

Ms. Mille Ternosky, POB 9536, Denver, CO 80209

Cliff Turpin, POB 7182, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

Fred Wren, POB 5206, Kansas City, MO 64112

Gene Zurenda, POB 228, Escondido, CA 92025

Brother Paul Preaches in St. Louis

On Sunday afternoon during services, Rev. Paul seemed to radiate with the love of God and he succeeded in getting everyone there "turned on" to the Spirit. His sermon was long and loud and it would be safe to say everyone was glad of it. We laughed and cried and were literally swept over with love for this man and the joy he spread around him. Somehow he managed, or at least it seemed so -- to condense every good evangelistic sermon I ever heard, his life story, gay rights, the purpose of MCC, and several other points into one sermon with great success. It was wonderful to listen to but this is one person who would not attempt to make an outline of it.

In additon to an inspiring sermon and gracious fellowship, Rev. VanHecke blessed us with his interpretation of a beautiful song, "I'll Walk With The King."

(From The New Light,
MCC St. Louis, January 1976)

Biblical Interpretations Recording Available

The Rev. Ken Martin, Pastor of MCC Chicago, spoke recently to One of Chicago on the topic of biblical references to homosexuality and the interpretation for modern gay living.

Well known Chicago attorney, Paul Goldman, a long time MCC friend, was in the audience that night and felt this information valuable for gays everywhere. Therefore, he offered to underwrite the recording of Pastor Martin's talk.

The record is available from MCC Chicago, P.O.B. 2392, Chicago, IL 60690.

New York City MCC Receives Member from Sweden

Anitha Wahlberg is a member of MCC New York City. She became a member in December while she was visiting New York. Her home is Stockholm, Sweden.

In Stockholm there is a small group of her friends who come together in worship. A church of Sweden pastor provides them with the Sacrament.

In a country where being gay is not as easy or open as some of us may have thought, Anitha and her friends are coming together, feeling the need we all felt: For a way to be gay Christians when the established churches did not fully accept us.

"Anitha carries back to her friends both her own experiences with MCC while she visited New York and the assurance of MCC's ongoing support to the gay Christians of Stockholm.

"The seed for MCC Stockholm has been planted. Anitha is one of us."

(From "The Mustard Seed," MCC New York, January 1976)

Fellowship In Unity

New Publication In the Works

In a letter to all congregations and ministers recently, the Department of Publications announced a forthcoming book, *Introducing MCC.*

Reaction was immediate. Phone calls and letters from ministers gave prompt and positive endorsement. Several sent and others promised contributions. One minister sent an inspiring personal testimony.

This story of the history and hope, the people and the work of MCC, will be published in the spring. More information can be obtained from the Publications office. Articles, personal testimonies, photos, etc., are solicited.

Rev. Phil Crum Serves as Chaplain to State Senate

On February 9, 12, 13, the Rev. Phil Crum, minister of the MCC congregation in Minneapolis, MN, had the honor of serving as Chaplain of the Minnesota State Senate.

"During that time," Rev. Crum writes, "we made some meaningful contacts with some influential members of the Senate and firmed our friendship with Senator Allan Spear."

IN UNITY readers will remember that Senator Spear is the legislator who announced that he was homosexual after several years in the legislature.

Women's Task Force Prepares Handbook

It has been three years since women in the Universal Fellowship have realized the need for a Commission dealing with the special concerns that face us. At our Fifth General Conference in San Francisco, the Commission on Women was established. This move illustrated that all our sisters and brothers saw a need and were willing to dig in and develop solutions to problems. A large part of our discussion that year tended to revolve around language and worship. While the simple message of John 4:24, that "God is a spirit" neither male nor female, was our central point, often we got sidetracked into discussions of pronoun usage. While this remains an important issue, we now have broad-

ened our scope to addressing ourselves to a larger range of issues.

Our structure change is a part of our new approach. We have now become the Human Awareness Commission which is composed of a Women's Task Force and a Men's Task Force. Our major project is putting together a resource handbook as instructed by last year's General Conference. One of the questions I am most frequently asked is, "What can I do about sexism in my church?" Hopefully, this handbook will contain material on female and male consciousness-raising as well as general articles on the problems of sexim and how to deal with them. We are also compiling non-generic alternatives for use in liturgy.

If anyone has any contributions or suggestions for resources, please let me know so that we may incorporate as much material as possible into our handbook.

Rev. Ann Montague
Chairperson, Human
Awareness Commission
8651 Thurston Road 22
Springfield, OR 97477

Rev. Keith Davis Meets with Gov. Shapp

Following the usual 3:00 pm worship service on Sunday, February 8, 1976, at Christ Church MCC in Miami, the Rev. Keith D. Davis, pastor, and Mr. Jack Campbell, local business person and president of the Alliance for Individual Rights Organization based in Miami, met with presidential candidate, the Honorable Milton Shapp, Governor of Pennsylvania, in a local Miami hotel.

Security was "tight" in the hotel areas with Secret Servicemen patrolling all entrances and exits.

The private meeting was arranged by gay activist, Mr. Mark Segal of Philadelphia who is a personal friend of Rev. Davis and who is serving on the Governor's staff.

Mr. Segal spoke for a few moments in the 3:00 pm service at Christ Church MCC and was greeted warmly by church members and guests.

The Governor outlined his proposal for his campaign in the Florida area and asked for the cooperation and advice of these two persons because of their influence in the Southern Florida gay community.

No commitments were given by either of the two, but the Governor was told they would give his request for their assistance sincere and serious thought.

Rev. Nancy Wilson Chairs Coalition of Gay Groups

The Rev. Nancy Wilson, Co-pastor of MCC Detroit, recently chaired a meeting attended by representatives of more than a dozen gay groups in Detroit.

They discussed the entire gay scene and drafted a calendar of social events for the next half year, including the celebration of Gay Pride Week in June.

They developed strategy for countering the rash of entrapment arrests in the Detroit area. Recently, the Rev. Heather Anderson, Co-pastor of MCC Detroit, appeared in court in behalf of 58 men entrapped in Plymouth, MI. She has been active in establishing a court monitoring program and has been meeting extensively with probation department officials in connection with entrapment cases.

In February, Nancy and Heather conducted a Holy Union for Jes and John, two men of the Detroit area, which will be shown nationally on NBC TV on March 8th.

One in Detroit prepares and distributes 2000 copies of a monthly calendar including dates and times of all MCC Detroit events.

(Information from Nelson Prins, IN UNITY Detroit area correspondent.)

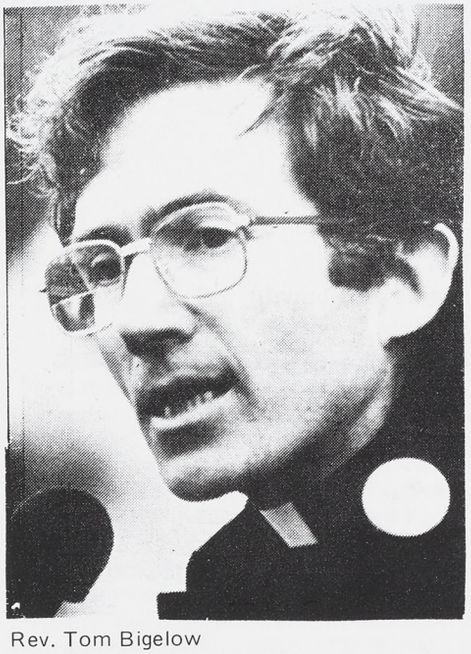
Plans for MCC in Scotland

Rev. Tom Bigelow, Coordinator of Church Extension in the United Kingdom and pastor of MCC London, visited Scotland recently to help interested persons establish an MCC Study Group there.

Alan Hunter, one of the leaders of the group, is quoted as saying that the visit of Rev. Bigelow was necessary and helpful because previous efforts to start a church in Scotland had failed for lack of guidance.

Rev. Bigelow conducted a series of meetings and discussions on several consecutive evenings.

Pastor Bigelow writes, "When I was in Glasgow, I used IN UNITY for evangelism. IN UNITY is something of which we all can be proud. There is something about putting a well-written and well-produced publication in someone's hands, then stepping back and letting the Spirit take over. It was a very effective tool for evangelism."



Rev. Tom Bigelow

Chicago MCC Sets 1976 Priorities

At the beginning of 1975, MCC Chicago established a priority of "altering the image" of the church in the gay and Christian communities of Chicago.

They began by opening communication and increasing cooperation with other groups. They continued by starting a number of outreach ministries and by expending a great deal of time in "public realtions" activities. As a result they have noticed a very positive response from both communities. Through the efforts of Rick Noll, Coalition Representative, MCC is very much in the center of community planning and cooperation.

For 1976, Rev. Martin writes, "we have established a different priority. It concerns our life together as a community of faith and especially our personal spiritual lives and commit-

ments. Now that we have broken down many of the barriers between ourselves and others, deepening our faith is the most positive and effective way for us to grow and reach out to our brothers and sisters in response to Christ's challenge."

(From The Shepherd's Staff, MCC Chicago, January 1976)

Handicapped Ministry Chairperson Appointed

Art MacDonald has been appointed by the Board of Elders to be chairperson of the Universal Fellowship Task Force on Handicapped Ministries.

Art has worked for several years in this area of ministry. He served as interpreter for the deaf during his years at MCC Los Angeles, and has acted as interpreter for the deaf at the last three General Conferences of the Fellowship and at District Conferences.

His goal as chairperson of the Task Force is to "raise the consciousness of every church in the Fellowship to the needs of the handicapped people in the gay community."

As part of his initial work in the Task Force, Art will be compiling a Fellowship directory of services available in our churches, and a handbook on a total approach to a ministry to the handicapped.

Art is founder of Fellowship MCC Mission in Cleveland, OH, and served as Worship Coordinator of that group. He can be reached by writing him at Fellowship MCC, POB 99234, Cleveland, OH 44199.

Illiamo MCC Moves Forward

In a letter of appreciation for the feature story about Illiamo in the January issue of IN UNITY, Donn Hornung, clerk of the congregation, supplied some additional information.

"Our Lord has been very generous with us and has recently provided 24 brand new chairs and 24 brand new hymnals with 'MCC Illiamo' on the covers in gold letters. God continues to show us the way 'step by step.' "

A Growing Fellowship

by Rev. Richard Vincent

Our Fellowship continues to grow in its mission to bring the message of Christ to all people as commissioned by God. Part of this growth is symbolized in the following actions taken by the Board of Elders at their meeting in Akron in January.

MCC Lexington, KY, was confirmed as a Mission based on application carried over from the October Elders meeting.

MCC Pittsburg was granted Mission status.

King of Peace MCC in St. Petersberg, FL, was granted a charter. Rev. Elder John Hose will present the charter on the date yet to be announced by King of Peace MCC.

Based upon the policy for recognizing individuals in areas of World Church Extension as License Ministers until the next General Conference so that immediate needs might be met by qualified ministers, the Board of Elders granted license to three people:

Rev. Jan Weymouth, Interim Pastor of MCC Gold Coast Study Group in Mermaid Beach, Australia. Rev. Weymouth was a Lieutenant in the Salvation Army with extensive experience and training in that body. Since joining MCC, she has served as an MCC lay minister.

Rev. Kenneth Taylor, Assistant Pastor of MCC London. Rev. Taylor has been active in MCC London since mid-1974 and comes to us with extensive experience and credentials from the Church of England.

Rev. Peter Donald Alexander-Smith, Assistant Pastor of Sydney, Australia. Rev. Alexander-Smith has been working with MCC in Australia and was formerly Priest-in-Charge of St. Francis of Assisi, Northfield, and Church of England Chaplain to Morris and Northfield Ward Hospitals.

All three of these individuals provided the required documentation and followed the established procedures for seeking a license as a minister in the Fellowship. We welcome them in warm Christian love.

Kansas City MCC Seeking Assistant Pastor

Pastor Ron Burcham and the Board of Directors of MCC Kansas City, MO, are actively seeking an Assistant Pastor for that growing church.

Interested MCC Ministers are invited to send a resume of education and experience to Rev. Burcham along with a letter of recommendation from their pastor and District Coordinator.

In order to attain a total staff balance, the request states, "we would prefer a woman or someone from a minority race, with administrative ability as a strong point."

Women's Caucus Organized in Pittsburg

The Woman's Caucus of MCC Pittsburgh provides a forum for women to discuss religious oppression and to work to eliminate it.

They have brought about changes in the language of the liturgy and are preparing a non-sexist song book.

Thanks from Pastor Maduka

Rev. Sylvanus O. Maduka, Pastor of MCC-Zaria (Nigeria) sent the following message to the MCC family and friends. "I have to seize this opportunity to thank the congregations, members and individuals who sent gifts, letters and telegrams of congratulations on the occasion of our first anniversary of MCC-Nigeria (November 16th, 1975). May God bless you and increase your resources in Jesus' name. Amen."

HOUGENS DISMISSED FROM STANDING

by Neil Miller
Gay Community News
Boston, MA
Reprinted by permission

Margaret and Ed Hougen and their children, Sarah and Ed Jr.

A specially-convened Ecclesiastical Council of the United Church of Christ (UCC) voted January 24th to dismiss the Reverends Edward and Margaret Hougen from ministerial standing. The decision, which applies only in the Franklin County (MA) Association of the UCC, was taken after three weekends of debate and discussion. Although no formal charges were brought against the couple, the meeting of church ministers and elders at the Trinitarian Congregational Church in Northfield MA voted 26-20 to dismiss Rev. Edward Hougen and deprived Rev. Margaret Hougen, his wife, from her standing by a 28-18 vote.

Edward Hougen, who is presently the Worship Coordinator of MCC Boston, gained wide publicity last fall when he 'came out' as a homosexual to his congregation in Orange MA, a small community east of Greenfield. Two weeks later, Margaret Hougen, who served as a part-time minister in Whately MA, told an interviewer for the *Greenfield Recorder* that her own sexual life was "non-exclusive."

The couple's dismissal from ministerial standing has no relationship to their ordinations and does not apply outside the Franklin Association. "We haven't been defrocked or anything like that," Margaret Hougen told GCN in a telephone interview. "The decision means simply that we're not employable any longer in that Association."

Both Revs. Hougen intend to apply for ministerial standing in the Metropolitan Boston Association of the UCC. They will submit a formal letter soon. Since neither of the Hougens has any immediate plans to minister to a specific parish in the Boston area in the near future, they see their application primarily as "symbolic and consciousness-raising." Ed Hougen told GCN that their application would "strengthen those within the church who want to deal with the issue."

While no specific charges were brought against the Hougens, the implication of the UCC decision was that their life-styles were unacceptable to the Franklin Association. "I think that they were afraid to bring any charges," Margaret said. "There was just so much division among them."

Ed Hougen stressed the ambivalence of the Ecclesiastical Council. "At the same time that they were dismissing us from standing," he commented, "they voted to commend Margaret for her valuable contributions and for her presentation of Christian ethics. They burst into applause after her speech and one church elder even referred to her as 'our pastor.' And at the end of the Council, they asked God's forgiveness if they'd erred."

"They were really struggling and having a terrible time," he added.

Although Ed Hougen admitted that he was "personally disappointed" and Margaret Hougen conceded that the decision was a "defeat" and "on some level a humiliation," both Hougens have no regrets as to the course their lives have taken. "We've come to the end of an ordeal," Ed Hougen said. "I'm not at all sorry. I've seen a lot of growth in a lot of people." and Margaret added, "I'm saddened but the struggle is only beginning."

Ed Hougen tended to see the result in the context of the "mainline churches' " attitudes towards sexuality and homosexuality. "I think that what we're seeing here and in the Vatican's recent statement is a real hardening of the lines on sexuality," he said. "Either the denominations will reform or they will die."

Margaret was especially critical of the clergy's "sexual spectacles." "What we tried to say was that sex is only one area among many to be dealt with. And then, ironically, we became totally identified with the sexual issue."

Turning to homosexuality, she continued, "There is a tremendous misunderstanding in the non-gay would about gay people. Yet I'm confident that there will come a time when people will not be so afraid, when they will realize the positive things that gay people can bring to the ministry."

"My own attitudes towards gay people are a living example of change," Margaret stated. "But then I've had a good teacher."

Margaret is interested in counseling and both she and her husband plan to lead a counseling group for couples in similar situations. As far as the United Church of Christ goes, she adds, "I'm interested in reminding them that I'm here and a minister and that they're missing out." ■

BISHOP ORDAINS LESBIAN AS DEACON

Ellen Marie Barrett, former co-president of Integrity (see IN UNITY, November 1975, page 4), was ordained a deacon of the Episcopal Church in New York City by Bishop Paul Moore, Jr.

The new deacon, who is 29, holds two master's degrees, including one with honors from a New York City seminary. She resigned as co-president of the Episcopalian gay group and as associate editor of Integrity Forum just before her ordination in order to serve full time as deacon at St. Peter's parish in New York City.

Dr. Norman Pittenger noted that many British clerics are known to be gay – including 4 of the 12 men named to a group to review Anglican-gay relations.

In the United States, gay ordinations may rival women's ordination as the key issue at the triennial Episcopalian Convention in Minneapolis next September.

HOMOSEXUAL MINISTER REMOVED FROM CHARGE

A United Methodist who recently acknowledged his homosexuality in a sermon remains under appointment as a student at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington but has been relieved of a 3-point pastoral charge. Vic T. Brittain, 35, has been a probationary member of the Virginia Conference since June 1974. Bishop W. Kenneth Goodson of the Richmond Area declined public comment on the matter. The Virginia Conference was one of many adopting petitions in 1975 urging General Conference to maintain the United Methodist stand of not condoning homosexuality. Brittain, who is separated from his wife of 12 years and their 3 children, has organized a ministry to homosexuals. One former parishioner was quoted as saying, "Everybody loved him and still does. But you just don't want a homosexual to be your preacher." (From United Methodist NEWSCOPE, Feb. 13, 1976)

notes

GAY CAUCUS WON'T PROPOSE ORDINATION OF HOMOSEXUALS

The United Methodist Gay Caucus will not submit legislation for the ordination of homosexuals at this year's General Conference. Keith Spare, caucus liaison officer, told NEWSCOPE Febuary 16th the decision came "as a result of our recognition that the church is not ready at this time." Spare said, however, the caucus does "affirm the right to minister" of a probationary member of the Virginia Conference who recently acknowledged his homosexuality (NEWSCOPE, Feb. 13). It is expected that this case will be discussed at the March 5-7 caucus meeting in Nashville. Spare said the caucus at General Conference will support: 1) establishment of a study commission on human sexuality for the 1976-80 quadrennium; and 2) deletion of "derogatory languate concerning homosexuals" from the Statement of Social Principles. The caucus estimates there are about one million homosexual men and women in United Methodism. Beyond General Conference, the caucus intends to work on theological action/reflection and on developing support for homosexual clergypersons. (From United Methodist NEWSCOPE, Feb. 20, 1976)

ADVOCATE TO HOLD INVITATIONAL CONFERENCE IN CHICAGO

David Goodstein, publisher of the national gay newspaper, the ADVOCATE, is hosting the 1976 Advocate Invitational Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel near Chicago's O'Hare Airport, March 27.

Goodstein said attendance at the meeting would be by invitation only. He made the invitations. The guest list has not been released. The Rev. Troy Perry has indicated to IN UNITY that he has been invited and will attend. Well known Los Angeles psychologist, Newt Dieter, has also accepted an invitation.

Goodstein announced in an article in the ADVOCATE that the purpose of the conference includes planning fund raising for an office in Washington, DC, to lobby for federal civil rights for gay people.

Another point of discussion, which has caused some concern among gay leaders, is the announced purpose of "dealing with gay spoilers, keeping them off the broadcast media, out of the print media, organizaing local media committees to educate media about whom to contact ... keeping them ("the spoilers") away from legislators, neutralizing them..."

Some negative reaction to the conference has been raised by numerous gay leaders who are being excluded from the meeting. One leader put it this way, "Judging from who didn't get invited, 'spoilers' are anybody who in any way disagrees with David Goodstein's philosophy."

DR. PITTENGER ON U.S. TOUR

Dr. Norman Pittenger, featured speaker at the MCC General Conference in 1975 in Dallas, is currently on a 45-day speaking tour of the United States.

One stop will be MCC Los Angeles for the 7:30 pm Service, Sunday, March 21st.

Other stops will be NYC, Princeton, Johns Hopkins, Randolph-Macon, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Nashotah House, Seabury-Western, Chicago, Kansas City, Salt Lake City, Pasadena, Claremont, Berkely, San Francisco, Ft. Worth, Dallas, Austin.

Further information, in most cases, can be obtained from the Episcopal Church headquarters in those cities.

METHODISTS HOLD GAY AWARENESS DAY AT CHICAGO SEMINARY

The President's Council of Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary in Chicago arranged for an entire day, February 18th, to be set aside "to give a balanced view of the outside world to both faculty and students ... to counteract the extreme homophobic attitude prevalent on the campus."

Currently an avowed homosexual applicant will not be accepted as a student.

The case for "gay acceptance" was presented exclusively by the Rev. Jim Hill, pastor of MCC Indianapolis (an ordained Methodist minister); Exhorter Val Bouchard, MCC Chicago; and a Methodist candidate for ordination.

Val was very excited when IN

UNITY interviewed her. "I feel very good about the day. The Spirit was moving. We got into deep encounters. I think we definitely affected thinking, whether or not they change the policy of refusing to admit known homosexual students."

The three gay visitors made short presentations to the assembled faculty, administrators, and students.

In the small 'group discussions it was learned that the policy is the result of pressure from the conservative "Good News" segment of the Methodist church. "We urged them to acknowledge sound theology and not to bow to pressure and use arbitrary standards for evaluating gay persons. In short," Val concluded, "we urged them to allow gay persons to be persons."

Before long some of the students began questioning the integrity of the administration in bowing to pressure. The day ended with student, faculty, and administration engaging in strategy discussions concerning the development of new policies toward gay people.

MICHIGAN EPISCOPALIANS VOTE DOWN PRO-GAY RESOLUTIONS

Both houses of the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan voted to defeat pro-gay resolutions at their Fall meeting in Detroit.

The matter had been deliberated for five years and had been in a trial acceptance for one year. In 1973 a diocesan committee had produced one of the most advanced and forward looking studies of homosexuality that the church has produced to date.

The defeated resolutions called for creating an atmosphere of openness and understanding about human sexuality; for making all ministries, professions, occupations open to otherwise qualified people, whatever their sexual orientation; for making all aspects of the church's life available to all persons regardless of their sexuality; and for the repeal of all laws which make criminal offenses of private, voluntary sex acts between mature adults.

Bishop Coleman McGhee, bishop of the diocese, courageously argued in favor of the resolution, even noting that he had been guided in his decision by gay priests in the diocese.

Forum, the national newsletter of Integrity, reported, "his appeal was to no avail." 101 clergy voted NO, 98 YES — 198 laity voted NO, 147 YES. The resolution was defeated 299 to 245.

In another action, the Diocesan Commission on Ministry adopted this statement:

NORTHEAST DISTRICT ATTACKS S–1

The Northeast District Conference meeting in Philadelphia, February 14th, voted to oppose Senate Bill 1, S–1, the proposed rewrite of the U.S. Criminal Code, which is, in fact, a "prescription for Fascism," putting severe restraints on the press and on individual rights.

The District Conference voted to encourage its congregations to actively participate in urging Senators and Representatives to defeat this bill.

The theme of the Conference was Stewardship. Gilbert Lincoln, Worship Coordinator of the MCC New York congregation, presented a paper on the conference theme.

The Rev. F. Jay Deacon, pastor of MCC Hartford, and Ms. Kerry Brown of Washington DC were selected for the District's representatives on the UFMCC Commission on Government, Structures and Systems.

The next Northeast District Conference will be held in Providence, RI, May 15-16, on the theme of Coveneant Relationships.

LIBERTY AND JUSTICE FOR ALL

The Dignity National Newsletter of December 1975 carries the full text of the sermon delivered by Father Paul Shanley at the Mass of Reconciliation in Washington, DC, on November 16, 1975.

This very learned "message to the bishops" is a powerful statement of the injustice of the past balanced with a just position for the future. The title of the sermon is "Liberty and Justice For All."

"The Bible enjoins us to put to death men who give up the use of women to be with men. No bishop would encourage such savagery. Yet, in history bishops have endorsed the death penalty for homosexuals. And by the silence of today, bishops carry on that tradition in the form of homophobia, indifference, neglect, rejection, violence.

"It's not that we don't listen to you. We listen to you carefully, sometimes in joy, sometimes cringing.

"Dear bishops, homosexuality is not a cross to be borne, but a life to be lived. In Christ's name, help us live it."

The same newsletter carried the full text of Brian McNaught's speech delivered on the same occasion. The address of the source of this twenty-page publication is Wayne Ward, Editor/National Office, 755 Boylston St., Room 514, Boston, MA 02116.

NUMEROUS MILITARY PERSONNEL COMING OUT DEFIANTLY

Since the "coming out" and subsequent publicity of ex-Air Force Sergeant Leonard Matlovich, numerous military men and women across the country have taken a stand in defiance of the military policy of peeping into the bedrooms of its personnel.

The January IN UNITY carried the story of Marine Staff Sergeant, Robert LeBlanc, an MCC member who is telling the Marine Corps it is none of the military's business whether he is or is not a heterosexual, or sexual at all.

Ensign Vernon Berg III, a 1974 graduate of the United States Military Academy at Annapolis, is the son of the Protestant Chaplain of the Great Lakes Naval Base in Illinois and has his father's full support in fighting against discharge on the grounds of being homosexual. He says he is. His father says, "Some people are born left handed and some are born right handed. In our family, we accept people the way they are."

Airman Richard Hicks is fighting a "rush" discharge at Langley Air Force Base in New Jersey.

A number of women across the country are fighting "homosexually grounded" discharges. One of them is Miriam Ben Shalom, a female drill instructor, gay activist, lesbian, spokesperson for gay rights. Sergeant Ben Shalom is fighting her discharge in court.

It seems the United States military commands will not be able to shame, coerce, and blackmail quite as many of its "stout hearted men" and "courageous women" into rushing out the back door with less than honorable discharges.

GAY CONFERENCE AND DISPLAY SET FOR SAN ANTONIO

"Gay in San Antonio — A sense of Belonging?" is an official part of the bicentinnial celebration. It is scheduled for April 30 through May 1, 1976, in San Antonio, TX.

The conference purpose is to explore how gay women and men relate culturally with non-gay women and men.

Speakers will include Karen De Crow, president of NOW; Gene Leggett, suspended Methodist minister; Elaine Noble, lesbian legislator from Massachusettes; Dwight Oberholzer, professor and author.

Further information can be obtained from Kathy Deitsch, Box 2036, Universal City, TX 78148.

Rev. Weymouth is presented to the assembly as Australia's first woman licensed to the ministry.

Rev. Weymouth and her spouse, Ms. S. Carol O'Keef. Also shown is Ms. Claude Deleiven.

AUSTRALIAN WOMAN ===

Continued from page

joyous applause.

After the service, Rev. Harris, nicknamed the "Pygmy Pastor" because of his height, gleefully pointed out that Rev. Jan's spouse, Carol, is even shorter than he is, quipping that "shorties should be our next outreach."

Adelaide, though only an MCC Mission, has shown a lot of initiative as a young congregation, under the leadership of Rev. Harris. Rev. Harris was the first licensed MCC Pastor in Australia. He celebrated the first Holy Union. He was the first to incorporate the name MCC under the laws of the state, and, at least partially through his efforts, the State of South Australia was the first state in Australia to legalize homosexuality. And Rev. Harris is reported to have remarked, "This is only the beginning. You ain't seen nothing yet."

Rev. Jan and Carol have movedto the Gold Coast in the state of Queensland where she has been named interim pastor for their flourishing Study Group.

(Above left) Rev. Perry and Rev. Carlton discuss the work and ministry of Metropolitan Community Church in Australia at a press conference. (Above right) The Australian churches welcome Rev. Perry, and (Below) members of Acceptance welcome Rev. Perry.

360 PARTICIPATE ===

Continued from page 23

From the very first prayer, to the last Amen, it was the most beautiful experience of my life.

No, the UFMCC in Australasia is NOT down under. It is UP TOP as the fastest growing area for the UFMCC. So, look out, mates. A fair warning! The Aussies are coming to Washington, DC! ■

GROWTH TO RESPONSIBILITY ===

Continued from page 5

ultimate responsibility of living the example (standard) of Jesus. However, secondary responsibilities will vary according to the "call" of the individual ... the requirements of the station of life one holds at the moment ... the momentary use of the "building."

A medical doctor is expected to know about the human body and its functions and to be able to treat illnesses. If the doctor can not or will not conscientiously perform this function, the "doctor" is not really meeting the responsibilities of a doctor and is failing in that "call." There are additional requirements to be an effective and successful doctor ... the "bedside manner," compassion and understanding for the needs of others, business decorum, dedication to duty, etc.

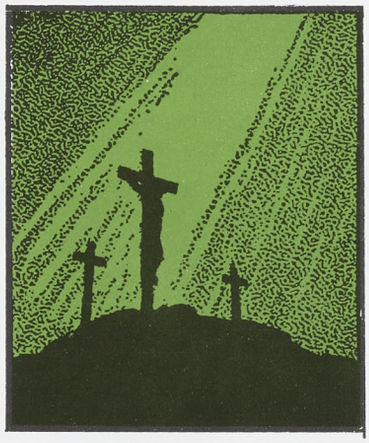
Now let's get to the heart of the matter. Let's talk about Christians that could be coal miners, grocery clerks, or research scientists. Let us also make it clear that we are talking about individuals who are not "Christian" in name only. Functioning Christians will have at least two things in common ... their love of God and their efforts to grow in perfection in the example set by the Christ, Jesus.

Each person is at their own position on the road to union with God. Those who are not yet seriously working on their own spiritual growth are somewhere near the beginning of the road. We each have our station in life ... our call of the moment ... and associated with that call are the attendant responsibilities and personal weaknesses. We can not judge or criticize another for being at a different place on the road but we can exhort that person to keep moving forward.. We do this best by showing in our own example that it can be done ... just as Jesus showed us that human nature can transcend the material world.

When a person becomes a Christian, God expects them to live a Christian life. When one says they are a Christian, others (Christian and non-Christian alike) will automatically expect that person to be striving to live a certain type of life exemplified in Christ. Otherwise, they will consider that "Christian" to be a hypocrite and non-Christians will see that hypocracy reflected in all Christians. An unfair evaluation, indeed, but the judgement will be made and a huge stumbling block appears in the road to Christianity for that non-Christian. Who is at fault ... the Christian for not meeting the responsibility or the non-Christian for rendering judgement? It's easy to say, "That's their problem," but it's another person's problem *only* if we, as individuals, have done our best to meet our responsibility.

Jesus said, "Every one to whom much is given, of them will much be required; and of those to whom people commit much they will demand the more." (Luke 12:48) Responding to the call to be a Christian results in assuming the responsibilities of that call ... otherwise, the call has not been accepted. The more extensive the call, the more extensive the responsibility .. "the more that is given, the more that is expected." This means that a church committee member has certain additional responsibilities to function as a Christian, a board of director has greater responsibility, and a spiritual leader has even more responsibility to demonstrate the example of Christ. The higher the position, the more one is expected to fulfill the higher responsibilities. It is false for a deacon of the church to say, "I have just as much right to throw a wild drunk in a bar on Saturday night and miss church on Sunday as any other member of the church." The claim is false because the deacon has been called to a greater responsibility. Double standards? Not at all! The congregation member should be setting a good example also, but the responsibility of the deacon is greater because of the call.

The responsibilities of spiritual leaders are the heaviest of all because they directly affect the spiritual life of others. The urge to become a lay or professional minister should not be taken lightly. The professional Christian minister, more than any other position, has the serious obligation to teach by personal example the qualities of true Christian responsibility. Through the call to the ministry, much has been given to the minister ... the guidance of souls ... and much is expected from that



minister. The call is from God and both God and human expect the minister to have grown to the responsibility of that call. In this case the weak excuse, "I'm only human" or "It's my nature," becomes even less valid. We can blame our "fault" only on self ... not on either God or humanity. Again, there is no "double standard" shown here. Ministers have a far greater responsibility to display and live, to the best of their ability at all times, the life that is really expected of ALL people ... even those who have not yet grown to accept Christianity ... because God's call is to every person. The more "visible" the minister becomes (through position or authority), the more responsibile that minister is for living the example of Jesus.

SUMMARY: In Eden, by direct and wilful disobedience to the will of God, humanity fell from the natural life in union with God. Since that event, the battle between good and evil in human nature has generated turmoil and confusion as people strive to return to the natural position of their creation. Then, as now, it was the responsibility of each individual to strive for a greater awareness of the Eternal Truth ... but the way was clouded.

At God's appointed time, as foretold by the prophets, the perfection of God was manifested in the material world in the person of Jesus, the Christ. By his teachings and example, the way was made clear. We were given the priceless gift of redeeming grace and much is expected of us in responding to this gift. Every person (Christian and non-Christian) was given this gift, although some are not yet aware of this gift and some have not yet accepted this gift.

Those who have accepted this gift have a special obligation to seek a continuing growth toward a life in closer union with God. This calls for every thought, word and deed to be in accord with the perfect example of the Christ. It is not important who we are, where we are, what we eat, or with whom we eat. The important factors include our loving service to God and our associations with other people ... our motives and purposes ... our thoughts, words and deeds reflecting the Christ example required of those who would truly follow Jesus.

The primary responsibilities (standards) are the same for ALL but the responsibility to reflect those Christian standards are much greater for those who are placed in a position of Christian leadership. There is no double standard ... merely a greater responsibility. To try to meet this responsibility but not fully succeed, is commendable all the same. To wilfully neglect or refuse that responsibility is to mock God and is to present a stumbling block for self and for others who look to their leadership for guidance and Christian example. Have your grown to your responsibility?

DEFENDING HER SEXUALITY ===

Continued from page 9

"We, the vast majority, are very happy with our gender and have no desire to become the other sex. Neither preys on children, preferring, like most heterosexuals, people in our own peer group," she said.

She says the homosexual desires emotional involvement as well as physical involvement with another person, with each seeking "that one person with whom we can spend the rest of our lives."

"We fear a lonely life without love just as much or more than a heterosexual does. The heterosexual, in the event of loss of the mate through death or divorce, at least has the support of society, and most of the time, children. A homosexual usually has neither."

The Mississippi-born lesbian said she was 17 years old before she learned what homosexuality was and that she was 19 before she had her first homosexual experience.

She attended Mississippi State College for Women from 1962-63 and then worked a couple of years as a reporter on a Mississippi daily.

Then, in 1966, she joined the Navy. She graduated with honors from petty officer military academy and within five years had worked herself up to Air Controllman First Class.

For her work controlling the landings and takeoffs of naval aircraft, in particular the prevention of the "wheels up" landings of two planes, she received commendations.

Despite her record she was given a general discharge for being a homosexual. Although the discharge entitled her to all the veterans benefits given those who receive an honorable discharge, it was a certificate that the Veterans Administration says is "given to those who make trouble."

She fought for and won an honorable discharge.

Her rejection and loss of a career that she loved led Jackie Harris to a suicide attempt.

"The most tragic myth of all about homosexuals," claims Harris, "is that we choose this lifestyle."

She said she conducted a survey among fellow members of the 115-member church. Of those replying, 25 indicated they had contemplated suicide, and 16 (like her) had actually attempted it.

"I hope these figures shock you into the realization no one chooses a life of ridicule, sneers, and condemnation by society," she told the forum.

"Only by the Grace of God am I here now," she went on. "The circumstances leading up to that attempt can be told in one sentence - I was persecuted by society, denied basic human rights, and estranged from the Lord because I believed those people when they told me I was less than a human being."

Harris said it was her "spouse" who led her "back to God and into a beautiful life."

She said she and her mate joined MCC, which has been operating in San Jose for the past four years, where they were married.

She says it has been in the last four years that she has been able to accept "my God-given sexuality."

"When I stopped condemning myself, I realized that I had the right to belive I too could be the Christian that I always wanted to be," she said.

"I can't possibly account for all homosexuals, just as a 'straight' Christian can't be liable for all heterosexuals. I can only say that MCC does not promote homosexuality. It promotes the love of God to all who seek it and desire to lead a Christian life." ■

FOUR CONGREGATIONS ===

Continued from page 8

Then there is that beautiful person named Galen Moon, who is the Chairperson of the Task Force on Aging. Galen has done a fantastic job setting up MLSC (Metropolitan Life Services Center.) It originally started as a center for the Aging, but has evolved into a Center for all people. The concept of Aging in this Fellowship is still in its infancy, but look for it to become an integral part of all of our churches. This is not an exclusive club. We will all belong to it one day. If you are past 50, start looking at the ways in which you can be creative, and put your experience and wisdom to work as Galen has done.

What adjectives does one use to describe Rev. Elder Carol Cureton? She gave me so much of her time. I almost felt guilty. We had some long and deep discussions and put together a paper on the Purposes and Projected Goals of the Commission on Innovative Ministries. All Study Groups, Missions and Churches will be receiving a survey questionnaire from her.

I appreciated having the chance to preach the Wednesday night service in St. Louis, and to offer the Holy Communion service on Sunday. After Sunday's service, the Social Committee had a suprise for me. They had a large, and I do mean large, cake that was inscribed with "Welcome Rev. Joan." On Sunday, I had told the congregation, "contrary to popular belief, I am really enjoying the weather here." On Monday 4 inches of snow fell. The reaction when I appeared at the church on Monday was, "I hope you're satisfied."

On to Albuquerque. Steve Quesnell, an Exhorter working in the Albuquerque Study Group, met me at the airport. Before I had a chance to catch my breath, Steve informed me he had set up a 1:30 meeting at the Narcotics Bureau (this was at 12:30 pm) and at 3:30 appointment at the Central Office of AA. Both meetins were informative and valuable. Rev. Kris Dodds and I were able to spend quite a bit of time together. There are times, in some of our smaller Study Groups and Churches, they feel like they are all alone in the world. I would like to suggest that you take time to write to some of these people and give them encouragement. Kris is doing a good job in Albuquerque. It is interesting to note that a Study Group the size of Albuquerque has a Convalescent Home Ministry, as well as an in-depth Alcohol program. We held an open seminar on alcoholism on Wednesday night which 12 people attended. On Thursday night they held their regular Sing and Praise service with 16 people attending. This is a good

showing for a Study Group that has some 25 people at Sunday services.

I must add here that Steve took me on some sightseeing tours in the afternoons, and we got caught in a snow storm in the mountains.

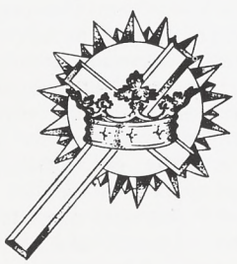
I arrived in Phoenix on February 6th to a flash flood. Deloris and Donnella Harrington graciously opened their home to me. I had performed their Holy Union in December, and I appreciated their hospitality.

On Saturday, February 7th, Michael Nordstrom, Josie Brankline and I went to the Hilton Convalescent Home and conducted Worship Services. What an experience! We received an offering of $2 and a bag of fruit. (I told Rev. Sandmire that I should have brought back an apple as their Fellowship tithe.) I was given an honorarium of $2 for preaching. I have the check framed and hanging in my office. (You can void the check, Mike.) On Saturday night, Mike, Josie, a Unitarian woman minister, and I had dinner together. I am sure the resturant thought we were going to become permanent fixtures, as we had so many things to discuss that we lingered for hours.

On Sunday, I had the honor of preaching at the Phoenix church to a very warm and receptive congregation. After services the "lovely" Lovedy Gilbert invited me to her home for lunch. This was the first time I had to spend any time with Joe Gilbert's mother. What a wonderful person she is.

Back to Los Angeles on February 9th. In looking back over this brief summary, I realize I have used many adjectives in describing people, but it is hard not to. The people of MCC are the most beautiful and warm people in the world. The trip was an unqualified success for the Commission on Innovative Ministries.

The newest area of innovation was born from this trip, because there are people who care. A Task Force on Drug Abuse is now in the making. I want to thank *all* of the people in each and every congregation for making this a memorable experience for me, and ask that any person reading this, who has any ideas in the areas of innovation, let us hear from you. We need ideas, suggestions and dedicated people. ■



You won your crown by being burned as a faggot during the Spanish Inquisition, Brother? I won mine in New Orleans.

EXERCISE ===

Continued from page 11

Christ-like life and how it could and should be our goal. More important than that, it told us how we could achieve this goal effectively and become better Christians.

Sunday was all the more exciting. As the day went on many spontaneous and inspiring things began to take place. It was as though the whole group was of one mind - and so it was.

We listened, we watched, and we learned. The many months of sacrifice, study, and prayer by the team payed off for one and all, including the team members.

Sunday night, at the closing ceremonies, I was privileged to witness the most moving and earnest testimonies I have ever heard. Not testimonies of spectacular accomplishments, but testimonies of love, humility, and new-found direction in life.

Anyone who was there will tell you that that Sunday night will not soon dissipate from the memory. The chilly night was warmed by smiles and embraces and tears. There was unity with God, hope for salvation, and above all a strong motivation to work for the Greater Glory of God. I shall not soon forget the feeling I had as I smiled back into the faces of people in which could be seen the light of God. I feel I was very much privileged to have been at Exercise 1, as I am sure we all did.

Driving home Sunday night was something in itself. I don't think I have come down off that cloud yet, and I hope I never do. Exercise 1 was a revelation for all of us. Perhaps Exercise 2 will be your opportunity. It just may make the difference for you.

"One Thing You Have Forgotten"

It is said that Luther during a serious illness seemed to see Satan coming to him with a great scroll, on which were written all the sins and errors of his life. Looking at him with a triumphant smile, Satan unrolled it before the saint: "There are your sins. There is no hope of your going to heaven." Luther read the long list with growing consternation, when suddenly it flashed upon his mind that there was one thing not written there. He said aloud, "One thing you have forgotten. The rest is all true, but one thing you have forgotten. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sins."

DIGNITY ===

Continued from page 36

The Vatican document fails to take into account the most recent studies of scripture scholars, who find, to the contrary, that the so-called scriptural condemnations are based on serious misinterpretations and mistranslations, cultural limitations, and a simple lack of understanding of the existence and reality of constitutional homosexuality.

DIGNITY reaffirms its call to the Church and the U.S. Bishops to appoint a committee of theologians, social scientists, and gay persons to study more adequately the question of homosexuality, and its implications for Church and society.

We repeat our call for a more sensitive, enlightened pastoral care, based not on continuing misconceptions and myopic repetition of tradition, but on a careful listening to theologians, social scientists, and gay people themselves, who are already living responsible Christian lives as both gay and Catholic.

DIGNITY trusts that this latest statement from the Vatican will be extremely disappointing to all responsible theologians and pastors who are crying out to the Chruch to listen attentively to the life experiences of its people who are living Christ's love and sharing that love in responsible sexual expression. (From the National Office of DIGNITY) ■

MCC ACROSS AMERICA ===

Continued from page 7

her spouse, Kathleen, with District Coordinator Beau McDaniels and her spouse, Sandy. This was not a matter of fact matter for me. For me, it was an inspiration. I'm sure it's not the first time four MCC ministers and their spouses got together for two days of prayer and spiritual rejuvenation. But when I do hear of it, I feel proud and inspired.

John, Jane, Julie, Rick, Bob, Pete, Mary Ann, and Paul: each is uniquely beautiful. The time with my children "revived my drooping spirit" like nothing else could. John's a senior this year, looking forward to a track scholarship to college next year. Paul's in the third grade winning hearts and conquering "cursive." Their mother, Nancy, who is somehow blessed with superhuman strength, has a knack for being the mother when needed, but also the guide for developing independence. She and her new husband, Frank, open the doors to me in a way that makes me feel "at home" in my children's home.

As I lay awake after the children were asleep, I thought back on the inter-relating circumstances which led to my divorce, separation from the family, and "marriage to MCC." I felt a strong sense of reassurance that it was all God's will. That was strengthened by some "happenstance" conversations along the way. A young Nazarene minister came to me pleading for an answer. "I want to be gay. But I want to be in God's will. *'Thou shalt not lie with man...'* and Romans 1:24 etc." I shared with him my own process of spiritual liberation which came not from dwelling upon the legalisms of Leviticus, but on the revelation of God as a God of love and acceptance as portrayed in the Jesus of the Gospels in what He said and what He was. I said, "for me, the starting point is not explaining away Scripture references, but in coming to know what kind of God God is." As we were talking, his eight year old nephew came from another room proudly showing us his new bible. I asked him to share with us the verse he was reading. *"I say to you love one another, just as I have loved you."* We looked at each other and we knew that God had spoken God's word through the mouth of a young one. Paul could rightfully condemn lust in Romans 1, but Jesus in John 15 and through His whole life preached and *lived* love.

On another occasion, the pastor of a large and prominent church of a well known denomination called me aside and asked many questions about the ministry of MCC. After some length, I'm sure it was when he felt he could trust me, he said, I'm a married man, father of several children, a member of one of the highest council's of my denomination, and I'm gay." We talked about it. I suggested he talk more with the MCC pastor in his city. I understood his position, his need to be in the closet, but his need for communication. Again, I thanked God for where God had led me. I realized that God provides answers, but not the same answers for everybody.

In Chicago it was like old home week. Rev. Martin made me feel at home in the congregation where I had once been assistant pastor. The Sunday evening worship service was so moving, spiritually and emotionally, that one member was "too excited to eat anything" at the restaurant afterwards.

It was the first anniversary of Ken Martin's installation as pastor. There was no doubt of the love and respect this congregation holds for Ken Martin as a person and as their pastor. A resolution attesting to that fact was passed at a recent congregational meeting. That Sunday he preached on the essentials of Christian worship, witness, and service in an ecumenical church. But he emanated leadership and love and that's what the people of MCC Chicago seem to want. The well trained twenty voice choir is a credit to the congregation which is averaging 200 at its weekly services. The post Communion "Alleluia." though remeniscent of MCCLA, had its own moving spiritual sincerity.

I was impressed by a lot of things: Rick Noll's successful formation of a coalition of 38 Chicago organizations which puts MCC Chicago squarely in the center of the life and growth of the wider community they serve; the positive image of the church in the community; the involvement of large numbers of the congregation in the life and mission of the church; the extraordinary fact that seven "highly talented" (in Rev. Martin's words) women and men are now studying for the MCC ministry in McCormack Seminary and other major Chicago graduate schools of theology.

I enjoyed the hospitality of the cheerful home of Rev. Martin and his lover, Tom. I appreciated the warmness of Rick Noll, church secretary, helping me carry my bags too many blocks to the "ell" station in the sub zero Chicago (very cold, windy weather). I noticed especially the talented young women including Exhorter Val Bouchard, a seminary student at McCormack, who have been motivated and guided in their call to serve the Lord by Rev. Martin. I was glad for the opportunity to get to know Norm Flowers better and discuss with him the excellent work he is doing in the prison ministry.

A highlight for me, too, on the Chicago area stop was a suburban visit and personal meeting with Keith, a friend with whom I had been corresponding for a year. Keith is a benefactor who has donated over $1500 to the Board of Prison Ministry and the Publications Department in the past year. This warm and loving gentleman, a clerk by profession and organist for a small Southern Baptist Church, has been most generous to the UFMCC. When he sent a large donation of several hundred dollars toward the reprinting of *Christian Sexuality*, he wrote, "If I were a rich man, I'd send more." This is from a person who has neither color television nor maid service in his home. But it is a warm home, made warm by a man with a big heart and a beautiful evangelical spirituality. Needless to say, meeting Keith culminated my trip in more ways than one. From his home, I made my way quickly back to the office and mountains of mail to open.

I came home convinced from a random sampling that MCC is alive and well and being blessed real real good — everywhere I went, and presumably everywhere. Praise God! ■

CHRISTIAN SEXUALITY

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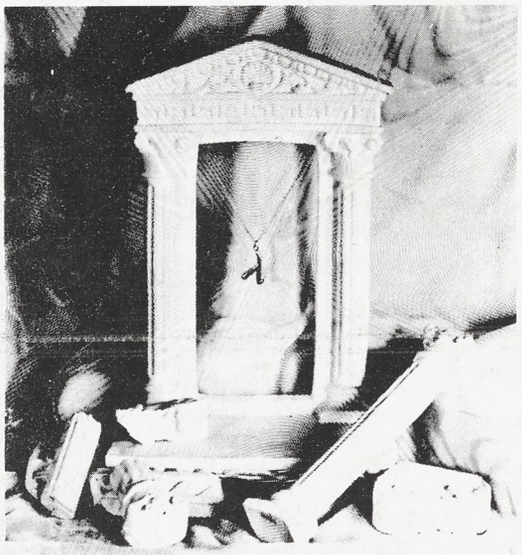

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